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# AMERICAN CHILDHOOD

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**A TUSCAN  
CHILDHOOD**



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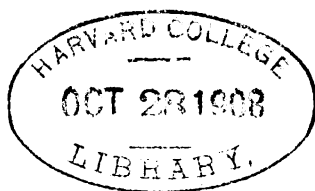
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**I DEDICATE THIS BOOK  
TO MY FATHER AND MY MOTHER**



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**I**  
**THE NOTES**



# A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD

## I

### THE NOTES

**W**HEN I was still a wee child I began my first diary. The few pages of these diaries that have been preserved are valuable material to me now. I also started a family history, beginning with my own birth. This family history, which never covered more than three pages of large foolscap paper, gives the following items as I remember them not too far away from the time when the events actually took place.

I first discuss the date of my birth: "Of course, I do not remember myself if the

[3]



## *A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD*

date is exact, and as Papa and Mama do not agree on the subject, I shall never know if I was born fifteen minutes before or fifteen minutes after midnight—either on the fourth or on the fifth of July. As my birthday has always been celebrated on the fifth, I ought to stick to that. But, on the other hand, as I find out that I am in the habit of being late, I suppose the Lord told me to come fifteen minutes before midnight, but I was late, and got there fifteen minutes after.”

This reference to one's birth is so classically customary in English literature, that there seems no reason to omit it from my autobiography.

The notes continue: “I was considered an uninteresting child. If I had been the only one, it might have been different, but I unfortunately was born in the middle of seven, and it is only the oldest and the youngest who count. Besides, they were

## THE NOTES

all brighter than I was. If I had my choice, I should always take a place at the head or the tail of a large family. You always get the worst of it if you are in the middle. You have to give in to the older children *because they are older*, and you have to give in to the younger *because they are so little*."

This is pathetic. I might have added that as the Bible says that the last shall be first, and the first shall be last, those "at the head and the tail" have some hope of relief, if their present situation is not satisfactory; but those who are in the middle have evidently no prospect of change and must bear their trials forever.

The notes continue: "My first vivid recollection is of a sound whipping for having eaten sugar, or rather, to be exact, stolen sugar out of the sugar-basin, every evening when we came back from our

## *A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD*

walk, profiting of the moment when everybody went to take off hats and jackets. I do not remember how my misdeed was discovered, but of nothing else have I been ashamed as of that."

I make an unchanged literal quotation, and as this was written by a little Tuscan without view of publication, the English may be allowed to stand.

"At that time we were only five children, and I can say that my memoirs begin before I was quite four. The first important event that took place at that time was the birth of my fourth brother. I remember distinctly the arrival of the peasant woman who was to nurse him, and I also remember how one morning we were all called into Mama's bedroom. We were placed in a row according to height, and then a very tiny little thing was shown to us. The nurse made him smile by touching his under lip with her little finger. We

## THE NOTES

all were allowed to look at him by turns, and were then marched out of the room, conscious that we were six instead of five."

The birth of Baby (his real name was Caesar Livy, but he was called "Baby" to the end of his little life) was a subject of great interest to me. I remember also how unduly I profited by the event. This needs quite a lengthy explanation. Ritchie and I, who belonged to the nursery, had one rocking-horse in common—a big horse, but still we only used it one at a time. The rules and regulations of the household were explicit in every detail. We, "the little ones," had breakfast at eight. At half past eight breakfast was supposed to be finished, and at nine the carriage called to take us to the park, where we played till twelve o'clock, when the carriage would come to take us home again. From half past eight to nine was the time for the rocking-horse, and naturally this time

## *A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD*

should have been shared equally between Ritchie and myself.

Baby's birth made me see a way of enjoying the rocking-horse myself for the full half-hour. For almost two weeks I set Ritchie, who was a year younger than myself, watching at the door of my mother's bedroom in hopes of being the first to see a new baby; not Caesar Livy, but actually a seventh addition to the family—probably a girl.

Poor little Ritchie waited patiently day by day, refusing his turn on the rocking-horse. The explanation I would give him for the non-arrival of the new little baby was: "They probably could not find a wet-nurse; they surely will find one to-morrow." And for two weeks I enjoyed the rocking-horse all to myself.

But tricks never pay, and when Ann, our English nurse, found out how, to use an American expression, I had stuffed my

## THE NOTES

brother, I in turn had to give up the rocking-horse to him for many days.

The notes continue to tell that for Ritchie and me "the children" were the oldest three in the family, and they were entirely separated from us, under the rule of the German governess. Alick, who came just before me, was allowed to spend his play and lunch hour with us. Promptly at twelve, when we had returned from our drive, Ritchie and I would present ourselves at the school-room door, and fearfully face the governess with the question—"May Alick come to eat his *panam*?" *Panam* being a childishly Anglicized form of the Italian word for bread.

It was not long after this that Ritchie, who was not yet four, got into trouble about his wife and his seven children. The catastrophe was quite unexpected. One day Ritchie and I were called in for

## *A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD*

dessert after my father and mother had had their evening dinner. Some German friends had been dining with them, and while we were nibbling at a wee bit of an orange, the conversation drifted to the Siege of Paris, recalling its horrors.

The talk was suddenly interrupted by a howl from Ritchie:

“My wife and my seven children! My wife and my seven children!”

“What wife and what seven children?” was the astonished question which met him on every side.

“My wife and my seven children. They have probably died of hunger, too.”

With much difficulty my mother found out that Ritchie claimed to have a wife and seven children living at Paris. He minutely told their names, their ages, their appearance, and their dispositions. He had been eagerly listening to the account of the horrible famine during the siege,

## *THE NOTES*

and nothing could convince him now that his family had not undergone these hardships.

My mother, with one of her inspirations, finally satisfied him by having a plate filled with all kinds of good things to eat, and ordering the butler to take it at once to Paris to Master Ritchie's wife and seven children. The next step was to send for a physician to find out whether a baby could be insane. The physician fortunately decided that the boy's sanity need not be questioned. A closer investigation brought out the fact that Ann had amused the child by telling him imaginary tales about this wife and these seven children, and that Ritchie firmly believed that they really existed, nor could my mother's reasoning shake his conviction in the least.

The nurse was cautioned not to entertain him in such a way again, and we children were instructed never to mention a



## *A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD*

wife and seven children in Ritchie's presence. For days afterward he wept in fear that his Parisian family had not had enough to eat, and for years we made it a point to whisper to each other, and not let Ritchie know what we were talking about, whenever we remembered the possibility of any one having a wife and seven children.

I also remember that he had called his third boy Peter, and that this struck me as showing bad taste. I thought that Alfred, Arthur or Harold would be preferable.

The only other incident the notes mention is my crime. "Though now I am far from being passionate, I then did something which must have given my parents a very bad idea of my future character. One day after dinner I was losing so much time in folding my napkin that somebody told Mathew to come and help me. I do not know whether his doing it in a bad

## *THE NOTES*

manner made me angry, or whether my little dignity felt offended by the idea of help. When he came near me I jumped up on my chair, and picked up a knife from the table, menacing to use it if any one attempted to snatch the napkin from my hands. Of course, I was taken away, whipped and otherwise punished, and a big fuss was made over it. Many times afterward I have thought of it with a sort of horror, wondering if it were enough to send me to Hell. It certainly was a strange thing for me to do; all the more as it is the only incident of hot temper that I remember. As a general thing I always did boil, and always do boil, inside."

This ends my attempt to write a family history.



## **II**

### **OUR ENGLISH**



## II

### OUR ENGLISH

**M**Y mother was a woman with theories, and one of her theories was that English women make the best nurses in the world. In order to have us well-washed, well-fed, and otherwise well-groomed, she established an English nursery.

From the hands of our Italian wet-nurse we passed into those of the English. Of our Italian nurse I shall speak again later.

The English language was, therefore, practically our first tongue. We learned to read in English, and the Mother Goose rhymes were as familiar to us as they could be to any child born in the British Islands. Even our Italian names were Anglicized.

## A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD

We liked the English influence thoroughly, while later we strenuously objected to our German governesses and tutors.

Our food was English. We had rare roast beef every single day, and a fondness for rare roast beef even now marks one distinct class of Italians.

Our clothes were English. We had to wear sunbonnets, and our little dresses left our necks and arms bare. Even our socks and our low shoes were distinctly English. All these things in those days were uncommon, but now they have been generally adopted by Italian parents.

As soon as we were old enough we had to take English long walks. Two hours every day we tramped along, one, by turn the victim, walking with the governess, while the others walked, paired off, in front. If the governess took five of us out walking, one of us would walk with her,

## OUR ENGLISH

while the other four, the envied ones, could walk ahead two by two, talking to each other about anything they liked—though the governess was German, when out walking we were always allowed to speak English. My mother never allowed us to speak Italian on the street. I may add that the English long walks had to be kept up by the German governesses.

The English influence has been a lasting one in our lives. Though it came early, and in number of years was not as long as that of our German instructors, it contributed far more to the molding of our characters, to a certain attitude of life, and to our likes and dislikes of a good many things.

The English language passed through us corrupted to the Italian maids. There were some words absolutely peculiar to our household. One was a mixture of the word *Bismarck*, which the popular mind



## A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD

evidently connected with the German governess, and the expression *bad mark*, which was introduced by the English nurse. Anyway, the Italian maids would, if we were naughty, give us a kind warning: "Look out, look out! Or they 'll give you a *bismacche*"; *bismacche* in their minds standing for a reprimand and a whipping.

By a curious coincidence, four of us had the same wet-nurse. She was a woman of remarkable character, and no English nurse, however excellent, could have done better by us than she did. She certainly coöperated bravely in teaching us to speak the truth, and not to be afraid of a whipping once we had brought it upon us. Yet, though to all appearances she submitted to the strictness of our foreign education, she suffered much to see it enforced. I have no doubt she would willingly have taken all whippings to herself if such a thing had been permissible.

## OUR ENGLISH

I must say, however, that I remember no friction between Italian and English in the household, while there always was trouble between the Italians and the Germans.

Our own English, though I suppose very correct for foreigners, was occasionally picturesque, and the picturesqueness was due to our Italian origin. I remember that Baby, when he was a little older, one day rushed up to my mother, exclaiming: "Mama, Mama! The fire has run away," meaning that it had gone out.

I do not remember any confusion of languages, though certain double meanings in English troubled me. One word, which it took me a long time to understand, was the word *pale*. I had a *pail* and a spade to play with in the sand on the seashore, and I distinctly remember my amazement at hearing my mother asking a friend of hers: "Don't you think the child looks pale to-day?"

## A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD

It was a well-enforced rule with us that we should ask no questions, and I never asked what I had to do with the *pail*.

When I was still a very young child, and I had my first German governess, I confused certain words that sounded alike in both languages. My mother having once promised to take us to a catacomb at Leghorn, where some bones, said to have belonged to early Christians, had just been discovered, I rushed up to my governess saying in German that Mama was going to take us to see *die Bohnen der Todten*. The poor woman was puzzled to know what we were going to do with the *beans* of the dead. She had not been in Italy long, and was evidently still much perplexed at Italian manners and customs.

Another time the same governess asked me to get her *ein Besen*. I rushed out of the room, and soon returned with the nurse bringing not a *broom*, but a *basin*.

## OUR ENGLISH

A favorite story of our nursery days we used to illustrate dramatically: "An Englishman made a German a present. The German expressed his thanks by saying '*Danke sehr.*' The Englishman, who understood it to mean *Donkey, sir*, and felt duly offended, challenged the German to a duel, and killed him." Ritchie and I acted this out many times, though sometimes we had to give up playing this game, because neither of us would consent to be the German. Our sympathies were always with the English.

It is remarkable, however, that learning several languages, for we spoke four before we were seven, we should never confuse them. The examples I give above are exceptions to the rule. I remember very, very few cases in which there was any confusion of languages at all, though I do remember learning the full meaning of single words in my own language, Italian,

## *A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD*

long after I had heard these words used. If we had been allowed to freely ask questions, even this difficulty would have been avoided.

It is very interesting, too, that when children are taught English and another foreign language, like German, besides, they invariably prefer the English language to any other. This is hard to explain. It is not hard to explain, however, that they should like their English nurses. I myself have the kindest recollections of, and the kindest esteem for, those I can remember.

I also look upon this English influence in our childhood as a most desirable one. My first book was Mrs. Edgeworth's "Frank," and I believe that it would be worse for me if I had not begun life on "When Frank was five years old his mother gave him a book."

I have always kept a fondness and an

## OUR ENGLISH

understanding for Maria Edgeworth, which, to my regret, most English-speaking people nowadays do not share. Even to-day I can read her children's stories and her novels with keen pleasure, and feel like valiantly breaking a lance in her defense when any one compares her disparagingly to Jane Austen.

My admiration for Wordsworth proved less lasting. One of the first poems I remember learning is "We are Seven." I delighted in that, and insisted upon learning—

The dew was falling fast,  
The stars began to blink,  
I heard a voice that said  
Drink, pretty creature, drink.

My fondness for Wordsworth exhausted itself with those two poems. I never have succeeded in reading him with pleasure since, though the Lord knows that I have

## *A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD*

tried hard enough to develop a due appreciation.

Italian children nowadays are generally taught German instead of English, because good English nurses and good English governesses are so hard to get. I think it fortunate for us that the English care came first, for the Germans instruct, but the English educate.

### **III**

#### **HOW THE CHILDREN HALLOWED A CEMETERY**





### III

#### HOW THE CHILDREN HALLOWED A CEMETERY

**O**UR fondness for our living pets was great, but it was equaled by the interest we took in giving our special favorites honorable burial. The sparrow Ritchie stepped on and killed received special funeral honors, not because particularly worthy of it, but because I had to be comforted in my unrestrained sorrow. I drenched half a dozen handkerchiefs with my tears.

We were spending the winter at the Villa of Pisa. Imagine a pretty villa built on the banks of the Arno and facing the south. Before it were two magnolia trees, as tall as the house itself, that in summer were full of large white blossoms, yet even in winter looked fresh and strong, with

## A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD

shining dark green leaves; then, several tea-rose trees, from nine to twelve feet high, that all winter long were laden with blossoms.

The garden ran along the famous public drive, the *Piagge*, and was inclosed by iron railings that allowed any passer-by to look in. Foreigners particularly would stop to admire the wonderful bloom of these trees. Frequently we were allowed to give total strangers, if they were English or German, large bunches of roses, handing them through the railing.

Out of the chinks on the sidewalk before the house grew big bunches of mignonette, while the beds of violets all along the railing scented the air.

This was our front garden, where we had to stay most of the time, because it was sunny, but *we had to be careful*, and this was, I suppose, the prime reason why none of us cared for the Villa of Pisa,

## *IN A CEMETERY*

while we all adored the Villa of Leghorn, where only a small section of the garden was not ours to do as we liked.

The back garden, to the north side of the house, was chilly and gloomy. Its principal charm was a row of beautiful camellia trees, but we only cared for a large cypress tree, under which we had been allowed to make a cemetery.

Here cats, dogs and birds were buried, and small marble slabs gave their name and the date of their death. Pisa is near Carrara, and marble is no great luxury. I must also conscientiously state that the epitaphs were put on in paint or ink, and that they generally lasted only a short while. When the rain had washed the marble clean, it was often used over again. The cemetery, moreover, was not more than two or three square yards. This so that nobody may receive an erroneous impression of magnificence.

## A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD

The tragedy of the sparrow was a simple one. I was sitting on the door-step watching my little sparrow hop around. Ritchie, a chubby little fellow, came running along, and stepped upon my sparrow. He killed it. I howled inconsolably, until "the children," who were just through their lessons, volunteered not only a magnificent funeral, but a slab which should tell of Ritchie's crime forever.

I do not know who composed the epitaph, but I remember it distinctly, and shall remember it, I think, till my dying day. It said:

"Riccino,  
Assassino,  
Ammazzò  
L'uccellino."

Englished: "Little Ritchie, assassin, killed the little bird."

I cannot remember if Ritchie took the matter to heart.

## IN A CEMETERY

The death of the sparrow led to somewhat unusual complications; at least, I have never heard of any other children getting into trouble in the same way.

That Pisa is well-known for its antiquities, it would be superfluous to mention, but the indirect influence of these antiquities on our school-room could scarcely be understood without a full explanation.

I have mentioned that my mother was a woman with theories, and that she thought English nurses were the best fitted to keep children well-washed, well-fed, and generally well-groomed. But when it came to the intellectual development of the child mind, she, being a German herself, thought that German training stood first, and our governesses and tutors were, with few exceptions, always German. She insisted upon their having excellent diplomas, and, indeed, engaged no tutor who did not have a university degree.

## *A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD*

Now, Italy, for many and various reasons, has always been the land that Germans dream of. Some long for it as the ideal place for a wedding-trip, others long for its climate, others for its art treasures, and others long for it for special reasons, as to study old Latin epitaphs, or to work out some particular point in architecture.

Our tutors were usually young men who profited of a chance to come to Italy in order to pursue their own studies side by side with their teaching. My mother engaged a young man who had brilliantly finished his university career, and who wished to come to us principally because we spent the most severe part of the winter at Pisa, where he could work out some point in connection with the sarcophagi, which still can be seen in Pisa's old cemetery. But this was discovered later.

He ruled the school-room with a rod of iron; in fact, he was dismissed for break-

## IN A CEMETERY

ing a heavy ruler on my brother's shoulder. It was he, by the way, who, not being allowed to whip my sister, used to whip one of the boys every time she did something wrong. She was expected to pay them one cent for it, but, with patrician contempt for money, the boys stood the whipping, and refused to be paid.

Instead of taking the children for the customary English two-hour walk through the beautiful country around our villa, the German student-instructor took them every single day to the old cemetery.

You remember it, no doubt—a large square filled with holy earth, brought at the time of the Crusades from Jerusalem, and all around it the beautiful arcade, decorated with the wonderful frescos, which people from all over the world come to see. Baedeker marks the Camposanto with three stars.

The children tried to amuse themselves



## *A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD*

as best they could. They played hide-and-seek behind the sarcophagi, those which the student did not happen to be studying, of course. They examined the frescos in detail, and described them graphically to us little ones when they got home. Particularly did they dwell on the fat, naked monk, almost rent apart by the angel and the devil struggling to gain possession of him.

But the frescos and tombstones very soon lost all charm, and after a while they were hard up for something to do.

You will ask: "How could they be kept two hours every day in a cemetery? Did the man have no sense? And what did your father and mother say about it?"

I can reply: "Alas! German educators have often plenty of uncommon, and just as often very little common, sense. As for my father and mother—the rules were just as strict concerning our asking ques-

## *IN A CEMETERY*

tions as they were concerning complaints about anything our instructors pleased to do. My father and mother had no idea that the children spent their afternoons at the church-yard."

It happened now that the funeral services for my sparrow, combined with the long hours spent at the Camposanto, fostered a curious idea in the children's mind.

They began to think that after all our own little cemetery did not amount to much, and that something ought to be done to make it more sacred. Finally they devised a way.

In the square of the Camposanto that I have mentioned as filled with holy ground, thousands of men had been buried. In one corner behind a large Roman urn was a heap of human bones that demanded reburial.

The startling idea of the children was this: If the holy earth from Jerusalem had

## *A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD*

made the Camposanto particularly holy, why should it not make our own little cemetery holy, too? If, moreover, they added a generous supply of the Crusaders' bones, surely nothing would be left to be desired. So for several days the two boys and my sister filled their pockets with earth from Jerusalem and human bones, that were carefully deposited in our play-cemetery.

Unfortunately one day the tutor brought them home somewhat late, and the bones and earth had to be left in their pockets. They were found by the nurse who attended to their clothes.

Her horror was indescribable. Almost howling she rushed to my mother, asking: "What does the German tutor want the signorini to do with the bones of the dead? Of course, he is a heretic, but shall he train the signorini to commit such sacrilege?"

## *IN A CEMETERY*

The tutor had to explain, and I do not think he passed a pleasant quarter of an hour. He had to admit that for many weary weeks the children had spent their walking time in the Camposanto; that he had given no thought to what they were doing. After that the English daily walks were conscientiously resumed.

The bones, to the smallest bit, were carefully collected, and reverently taken back to the corner of the Camposanto, where, no doubt, they lie to this day.



# **IV**

## **ON DOLLS**



## IV

### ON DOLLS

HAVING my place in the family between two boys, I preferred their amusements to my own, and, on the whole, my interest in dolls was not great. I did not care to play with them unless my brothers joined me, and this I could not often induce them to do.

Alick was fertile in luminous ideas, and he had one inspiration which furnished our elders endless merriment. It amused even my father when he heard about it.

The documentary evidence is in my possession to-day—a priceless treasure. It is a sheet of heavy drawing paper, to which passing years have imparted a yellowish tinge which makes it look like parchment. On this sheet, Alick, in his



## A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD

childish handwriting, has written in Italian, that he had drawn up a contract between Ritchie and me. According to the contract, I selected Ritchie as the father of my three daughters. There are two clauses: First, it is distinctly understood that the father may not touch the daughters without the permission of their mother; if he ever does, the contract shall be considered at an end; second, if the father gives his daughters any presents and does not state distinctly beforehand that he may, at pleasure, take them back, it shall not be permissible for him to take back such presents; but the mother may at her pleasure, confiscate them and appropriate them to her own use. At the bottom of this document are three signatures:

Signature of the mother—*Lisi*;

Signature of the father—*Ricci*.

Witness—*Alick*.

## ON DOLLS

There has been only one period in my life when I played with dolls a good deal, and this was when I was nine years old and had to lie in bed ill most of the time for a whole winter. I had eleven small china dolls then, and these I organized into a dramatic troupe. The object of my dramatic performances was a revengeful one, and this requires some explanation:

We had a governess, a German of course, whom I particularly disliked. She must have been a good teacher, judging by some of our exercise books that still exist, but she lacked tact, truthfulness, and justice. The incident which first roused in me an active dislike that never ceased was characteristic.

One day in the history lesson Fraeulein asked for a book. We were all in the school-room, seated at the large walnut study-table, we on stools, and Fraeulein on a comfortable chair with a back to it.

## *A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD*

When Fraeulein asked for the book I at once jumped up with the intention of getting it out of the book-case. I had scarcely reached the middle of the room when Fraeulein shouted:

"Sit down!"

"Immediately," I answered, starting back for the table.

"Not immediately—instantly!" was the fierce, angry order.

I sat down on the floor.

This was one time my mother refused to punish me when I was reported to her for insolent behavior.

Fraeulein succeeded in drawing out the worst in me. Never before and never since do I remember showing such bitterness and such contempt for any one.

Another time, when we were spending the summer months at Leghorn, my mother went to Germany and left Alick, Ritchie, and me alone with Fraeulein.

## ON DOLLS

Every evening we were allowed to go to The Baths, where we met other children with whom we could play.

Class distinctions are marked in Italy, yet there is a certain democratic sentiment which draws all people together on an equal footing on the mere basis of culture and education. Besides, whatever the faults of Italians may be, they are not snobs. The least snobbishness, the least expressed consciousness of superiority because of a difference in rank or position, would have appeared unpardonable to us. But we had an instinct that told us whether people were nice or not.

Fraulein lacked this instinct entirely, and she became acquainted with several Jewish women who, however respectable they may have been, were decidedly vulgar. Now, while the Jews at Leghorn are very numerous, and some of them no doubt have many of the less desirable

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characteristics of the Jewish race, there are, however, Livornese Jews who are highly educated, and who are treated as equals by the most cultured people in Italy. In fact, the prejudice against Jews in Italy is not as strong as it is in America.

Fraeulein's friends lavished fulsome flattery upon me. The climax was reached when one of them, after extolling my beauty, my clothes, my intelligence, asked if she might kiss me.

"No," I answered. "Mama never would allow it in the world."

Fraeulein was horrified, took me away and punished me. Then she asked me:

"Why would you not let that nice lady kiss you?"

"I don't like her," I said. "Besides, she is a Jew."

"But," Fraeulein remonstrated, "don't you know that even our Lord Jesus was a Jew?"

## ON DOLLS

"I know it," was the prompt reply. "Jesus was good. I know he came on earth poor and humble, when he might have been a king, and he probably chose to be a Jew so as to be as low and despicable as possible."

This sparring was not conducive to an amiable understanding between Fraeulein and me, and in the winter, when we had left Leghorn, the breach grew wider and wider. At that time—after a courtship which my mother did not know about till long after I had discovered it, and which had aroused my contempt—Fraeulein became engaged to my brother's Latin tutor.

She was as sentimental as a German can possibly be, and that means beyond description. Until she met this young man her *Schwaermerei* had been divided between *Goethe* and *Unser Fritz*. In fact, she had the pictures of the three—

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the greatest German poet, the Imperial Crown Prince, and the Latin tutor—on her bureau. In the evening before going to bed she kissed them all, the last one twice. The common-sense instilled by our English nurses made me look upon this performance as idiotic.

The dolls served me now to pay Fraeulein back for all the unreasonable, unjust punishments I had ever received. I organized them into a dramatic company, those four and five inches long representing adults, those two and three inches long representing children. I composed only one cycle of plays, all centering about Fraeulein and her love affairs. The principal personages were, Fraeulein (who being called Helena, Italian Elena, was given the fictitious name of *Balena*, the Italian for *whale*) ; her lover; Goethe; Unser Fritz; and tradesmen, a butcher, a baker, etc. The plot of my plays varied.

## ON DOLLS

We made our actors speak in German, Italian, and English. Sometimes the scene would be as follows:—

The governess and the tutor were presumed to have been married. The butcher came with a bill:

*She.*

I need money to pay the butcher's bill.

*He.*

I have none, I never had any, and I 'm never going to have any.

*She.*

But we must pay the bill, or we shall not have anything to eat.

*He.*

Why don't you get somebody to give it to you?

*She.*

I shall try with Goethe.

*(Exit He. Enter Goethe. The doll being china could not be made to bend her knees, and as she assumed a deferential position, generally had to lie on her face.)*

*She.*

Dear Goethe, I have loved you all my life. I have kissed your picture every evening before



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going to bed. Don't you think you ought to pay my butcher's bill?

*Goethe.*

I am writing poetry. I cannot pay butcher's bills.

*(Exit Goethe. Enter He).*

*He.*

Has Goethe paid the butcher's bill?

*She.*

No, he has not. The butcher will not give us any more meat, and we shall have nothing to eat for dinner.

*He.*

Why don't you ask Unser Fritz to pay the butcher's bill?

*She.*

I shall do so.

*(Exit He. Enter Unser Fritz.)*

*Unser Fritz.*

What do you wish?

*She.*

I have loved you all my life. I have always said you were the handsomest man in the world. I have kissed your picture every evening before going to bed. Don't you think you ought to pay my butcher's bill?

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*Unser Fritz.*

Of course I shall, gladly and at once. Here is money, take it!

*She.*

Thank you, thank you, Unser Fritz. Henceforth every night I shall kiss your picture twice and Goethe's on'y once.

*(Exit Unser Fritz. Enter He.)*

*She.*

Unser Fritz paid the butcher's bill.

*(The two dolls join hands, and are made to dance around the improvised stage, crying: "Happy Gee Geel")*

There were numerous variations to this scene, and other highly sensational plots, conjugal quarrels particularly, in which *He* invariably threw at *Her* a fork, which was said to stick in her cheek. The spectators had to use their imagination because, being a china doll, a realistic carrying out of the scene was out of the question.

These performances often used to be

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given when I was lying in my little bed alone most of the day. The stage was an invalid's table that could be put right before me. Only at the play-hour, after dinner, were my two little brothers, Alick and Ritchie, allowed to come in and keep me company. Then the real performance was given. The dramatic work done when I was alone might be considered as rehearsals.

Once or twice Fraeulein was an unwilling witness. She burst into tears, calling me names. When my mother finally found out about it, even this German governess went her way.

But she had scarcely had all she deserved. To save herself trouble, she had done intellectually with me what some wretched women in poverty-stricken factory districts do materially with their babies. They poison their babies with brandy in order to keep them asleep and quiet—Fraeulein risked poisoning my

## ON DOLLS

mind with the most sentimental, sensational German novels in order to spare herself trouble and keep me satisfied during a winter of illness.

Volume after volume of the German periodicals, *Die Gartenlaube* and *Ueber Land und Meer*, did I swallow—swallow is the only suitable word. The triangle situation—husband, wife, and the objectionable third—was familiar to me, and, in fact, my idea of the trouble about household bills did not come from home experiences, but from the trite parental speeches against love in a cottage found in the novels I had read.

Most of Auerbach's novels I had at my disposal, and *The Villa on the Rhine*, in which a German tutor comes to the United States and joins the Northerners during the War of the Rebellion, inspired me with deep-felt sympathy for the South, which has lived on to this day, though,

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with my long experience in the North, I have taken a very different view of the Yankees. But my first impressions were—the North for German tutors, the South for people who had no use for them, *ergo* my sympathies were all with the South.

My gratitude for my early English education is particularly strong, because I think that without it this period of novel reading (I was still little more than a baby) might have been pernicious. As it was, it only developed an almost unreasonable and unjust scorn for Germans, whom I judged entirely by my governesses and the heroes and heroines of the periodicals I had read. Only much later did I learn to value the German people for the sincerity of their feeling, their earnestness and their scholarship. But, curiously enough, it has been in America that I have grown nearer to this land of my fathers, for I must not forget that I am part German myself.

# V

## MY MOTHER AND HER DOLL



## V

### MY MOTHER AND HER DOLL

**T**HE best doll story in the family is about my mother and her doll. This becomes a reminiscence of my own childhood, because of all the stories I then heard, it was my favorite one.

Having mentioned the fact that I was considered an uninteresting child, it will surprise no reader if the best stories are not about myself.

My mother was born at Leghorn. Leghorn is the ugly duckling among the hundred cities of beautiful Italy that our poets write about. We consider Leghorn a new place, because its existence as a real city dates back only four or five hundred years, and we ascribe its lack of ar-



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tistic interest to its newness. Old age, like everything else, is relative.

Before the days of United Italy, Leghorn was a free port, and was far more important and prosperous than it is now. In those days it gave its name to Leghorn chickens and Leghorn hats. Moreover, travelers by land and sea used to stop there on their way to Southern Italy, and many English personages mention Leghorn in the account of their travels.

Toward the middle of the last century my grandfather was German Consul-General at Leghorn, and he was a most remarkable man; not only remarkable, but distinctly original.

He came of Saxon parentage, and as far as I can make out, of small landed nobility. He was the youngest of twenty-four children, all of one mother, and nineteen of whom sat at table at one time. This, according to modern scientific theo-

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ries, may account for the strength of character which he developed. Reared on Germanic ideas as to the authority of the elders, the child who lives through being bossed by twenty-three brothers and sisters, and other relatives and friends whom we can presume existed, can surely be accepted as an instance of the survival of the fittest, who, not being crushed, probably developed abnormal tenacity.

Moreover, his childhood coincided with the terrible Napoleonic wars. Three of his brothers fell in the Battle of Luetzen. This would have been enough to make him dislike the French, for you can hardly be expected to feel friendly toward a nation that kills off your relatives wholesale; but this was the least.

The French were once quartered on his father's little estate, and some brutal, drunken soldiers kicked his mother downstairs, causing injuries from which she

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never recovered. This made the consul-general hate the French, and, because of their relation to them, all the Latin races. If he had not hated the French and the Latin races, this story of my mother and her doll could never have been written.

Being the youngest of the twenty-four children of a German country gentleman with a diminutive estate, it stands to reason that he had to make a living. Foreign military service was almost the only profession open to the impecunious young nobleman. He entered the English navy, in which he served creditably for several years. He finally resigned, and joined a brother at Leghorn. Though it would perhaps be interesting to tell how this brother got to Leghorn, why my grandfather joined him, and how he finally became consul-general, it would take me too far away from my subject—My Mother and Her Doll—and I must leave such de-

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tails in order to plunge just as soon as possible in *media res*. I cannot do this, however, without at least telling that he had great luck, for he married a pretty, rich young Italian girl of good family.

They had a little girl—my mother.

The consul-general in some ways was distinctly queer. He left home before the child was born, saying that if it was a boy he would come back; if it was a girl he would not. He evidently did not plan to have as large a family as his father had had before him, and considered this first experiment final. The child, as I have said, proved to be a girl, and the consul-general would not come home. He stayed away for eighteen months, until they sent him a beautiful miniature of the baby. The sight of the baby face—an exceptionally beautiful one, too—evidently awoke the consul-general's paternal feelings, and he returned to his own home, relieving the

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vice-consul of the extra duties the poor fellow had been compelled to carry.

I have tried to show how environment in early youth developed certain characteristics of resistance, and made of him, as a German friend of mine puts it, "a much obstinate person." He gave in a little, but very little. When he came back he allowed himself to be fond of the child, though it was a girl, but—and here his queerness showed again—since he could not get around the fact that she was merely a girl, he simply controlled the situation by bringing up the child exactly as though she had been a boy.

Now, at Leghorn, seventy-three years ago, to bring up the daughter of an Italian mother as a boy was a tremendous thing to do. Yet he did it, and not only did it bravely, but successfully. The child learned to speak four languages with equal fluency, an unheard-of thing for

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girls to do in those days. She learned to tramp for miles through the country, to ride horseback and to swim, though then young ladies hardly ever took long walks, rode or swam. Just as soon as she was old enough she was even made to study bookkeeping and the elements of law. Yet the crowning masculine accomplishment was obtained when every Sunday morning the Austrian drum-major was summoned to make her beat the drum. Then the consul-general was satisfied, for he had got the best of destiny.

Evidently, however, there was a lurking Germanic sense of the proper sphere of woman, and this showed in one phase of the child's education. Part of the day she was given in charge of two genteel English women, who taught her the English language, and what they considered the best of English manners. Incredible, though true, she was actually taught to

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shape her mouth by saying *prunes*, *plums* and *prisms*. She had to lie flat on her back one hour each day; and she was taught a primness of speech of which the Italians are blissfully ignorant. For instance, once when on returning from a long walk she remarked: "Oh, my legs are so tired!" she was solemnly informed: "Young ladies never have legs, they have only feet." Since nature had endowed the child with exceptional beauty, and absolutely exceptional intelligence, the result of her extraordinary training was at once charming and unusual.

The consul-general hated the Latin races with characteristic tenacity. This, of course, makes it rather strange that he should have taken an Italian wife, but probably he did not consider a woman of enough importance to give her nationality much thought, and if he paid such attention to his little daughter, it was to make

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her as little a woman as possible. Still as the child grew in beauty, strength and intelligence, he realized that the time would come when she might by marriage fall into the clutches of some man of the hated Latin race. This he was determined to prevent.

He thought long and hard, and finally succeeded in solving the problem to his satisfaction. He decided to marry her to a man of his own race. But in those days Germans were scarce in Italy, and especially at Leghorn; at least Germans who could be considered proper suitors for the daughter of the consul-general. He had a friend who would have made an ideal husband, save for one serious drawback. He was thirty-five years older than my mother. Still, a husband thirty-five years older than his wife, and German, seemed preferable to an Italian, even though the latter were of a more suitable age. So



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the consul-general decided the matter in his own mind, and soon persuaded his friend of the desirability of such an arrangement.

The friend was a dear man. He had known my mother all her life. Indeed, when she was weaned he had carried her up and down in his arms all night, and this because he was the one who could best subdue her wailing. He had often done the same for her when she cut her first teeth. Moreover, ever since she was a mere baby he had contributed two fine dolls a year to her collection, dolls that always came directly from Paris and were the best any little girl could wish for. My mother was exceedingly fond of dolls, a feminine perversity in the face of the efforts her father had made to give her masculine tastes and inclinations. But the fact that the friend gave her the dolls, and that my mother preferred such presents

## *MOTHER AND HER DOLL*

to any other, had established a particularly friendly relation between the two, although it scarcely paved the way to marriage.

Yet the friend was persuaded to overlook all difficulties and on New Year's Day, in the fifteenth year of my mother's life, he sent her a formal letter in which he requested her hand in marriage. It was written in German, and requested the high-born young lady to do him the honor of conferring her hand upon him. I have seen the letter, and I can testify that it was a most complicated and elaborate epistolary performance.

His Christmas gift had, as usual, been a doll, and a particularly fine one. No wonder, therefore, that my mother was not prepared for an offer of marriage, all the more as she was young for her age, and had not the slightest tendency to let her thoughts rove in this direction. When

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the letter first came she was delighted at the mere fact of receiving it, for fifty-nine years ago correspondence was not quite as commonplace as it has grown now, and for a little girl a letter was an exceptional treat. Her first delight was followed by an impression of surprise and bewilderment. She did not understand what her good friend meant, nor why he wanted her hand! She willingly would have given him both hands any time he came, and saw no reason for his writing a letter about it. You must remember that German was an acquired language for her, and that the English maiden ladies had not let her wade through volumes of trashy German periodicals. At fourteen she had not philosophized as to life and marriage as much as I had at ten.

After having pondered over the missive, she took it to my grandmother, and asked for an explanation. My grandmother,

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who did not know German, but did know the contents of the letter, made the matter clear to her in the following way:

"Harriet," she said, "would n't you like to go to Paris?"

"Yes," my mother answered promptly, "but what has that got to do with the letter?"

Then my grandmother, who was an Italian, and in true Italian fashion overlooked everything in her pride of marrying off her daughter when she was only fourteen, replied:

"The letter means that if you 'll marry our good friend, he will take you to Paris."

This decided the matter. My mother was delighted at the idea of going to Paris with her good friend. She says that she had secret visions of an unlimited number of dolls. The betrothal was announced to friends and relatives, and my mother found herself suddenly grown up.

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Consequently she had to put on long dresses. The effort to masculinize her had made her an active, restless child, and she confesses herself that she was somewhat of a tomboy. Moreover, she was very small for her age, and did not appear as old as she actually was. She had no desire whatsoever to grow up, and when she found that giving her hand in marriage involved wearing long skirts, she wept and wailed, declaring that under such conditions she would never get married.

But the consul-general was a man of iron. He convinced her that, once she had consented, nothing on earth could excuse her for breaking her word. Even if she did not want to get married, she would have to wear long skirts anyway as a punishment, so that the poor child found there was no escape for her: her choice now lay between long skirts and a trip to Paris, or

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long skirts and staying at home in disgrace. No wonder she decided on the former.

In May, only a few days before she entered on her sixteenth year, the marriage took place, and her husband immediately fulfilled his promise of taking her to Paris.

It was before the days of railroads, and the journey through central Italy was beautiful beyond description. Much had remained unchanged when I was a child myself. In the month of May the wheat-fields in Tuscany are an emerald-green. The mulberry trees are planted at equal distances on the border of every field, and from tree to tree the vines hang in regular graceful festoons, never more beautiful than when, as just at this period, they have put on their garb of transparent green young leaves. In the stretch from Leghorn to Pisa the view is often free,

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and the eye rests on an expanse of green meadows that are used for pasture, and are segmented by a network of canals, which in those days were the mainway of traffic between Leghorn and the inland. Boats, much larger, though somewhat similar in shape to the Venetian gondola, were drawn by men who, like beasts of burden, were harnessed to ropes and walked along the borders of the canals. When the wind blew in the right direction sails were put up to lighten their labor. As the canals are narrow, and the water in them cannot be seen, while the sails of the boats show plainly, one got the impression that the ships were sailing freely on the green grass. And this reminds me—Alexander Dumas *père* in a book of travel on Italy, in all seriousness states that in his day the Tuscans were still so far behind the times that they plowed their fields with sails! I do not know if the consul-

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general ever came to know about this, but it would, no doubt, have served to increase his contempt for the frivolity of the Latin races.

My mother, who had not often left home, and to whom driving from Pisa to Leghorn and watching these boats was as great a delight as it later was to us, enjoyed the beginning of her travels very much. From the window of the carriage she eagerly watched all these sights. But when they reached northern Italy, and had to drive for days and days over long, dusty roads bordered with stately, monotonous poplars, she began to be bored. She regretted her bargain. She was sorry she had ever married, even if it meant going to Paris.

What her husband thought, I do not know. He had married my mother with the understanding that he was to save her from the possible calamity of marrying



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into the Latin race. He fully recognized the fact, as did also the consul-general, that my mother was altogether too young to be treated as a real married woman, but he expected that time and patience would make her into something that would brighten and bless the last days of his life. Anyway, my mother admits that he had his hands full during their wedding-trip, for she proved a most restless, trying, traveling companion. I think that he must have felt more like a governess than like a bridegroom.

He was a sweet-tempered man, and very kind to her. In fact, during this whole trip he lost his temper only once, and then he had some excuse for it. They had been stopping over night at some small inn in northern Italy. My mother, who had grown to dread the long days in the closed carriage, made the most of her opportunity, and rising with the sun ran into

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the fields to catch butterflies. Later in the morning the inn-keeper saw her and called out to her: "Signorina, will you please tell your grandfather that the post-horses will be ready in a short time, and that breakfast is waiting for you?"

My mother rushed to her husband in perfect delight, crying: "They have taken you for my grandfather, the horses will soon be ready, and breakfast is waiting for us."

Then it was that the husband lost his temper.

They finally reached Paris, and both were equally glad of it; my mother because she would not have to sit still so much of the day, and her husband because he found some one to help him in his pedagogical duties.

In those days a newly-married woman had but little more liberty than an unmarried girl, and that means almost no liberty

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at all. My mother found a chaperon ready for her, a Countess de Montmorency, who was a dear friend of my grandmother's.

The countess was a reactionary aristocrat. What I mean by this is that she belonged to the class of French nobles who, after the Revolution, spent their lives in due contemplation of the privileges of which the Revolution had deprived them, and which the restoration of monarchy had at least nominally brought back to them. The countess was an acute chronic case. During the Revolution her family had been among the unfortunate emigrants who had known the worst poverty and distress, and, still a mere child, she herself had been compelled to sell *petits pâtés* in the streets of London. No wonder that she spent her life reacting against a world that had allowed such things. But what interested me most, though it has no direct bearing on my story, was

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that as a child the countess had been a playmate of the unfortunate Dauphin, the little son of Marie Antoinette.

My mother admits that the countess was sincerely interested in her, and that she got her clutches on her with the intention of doing her much good. She taught her things which even the genteel Englishwomen had not taught her. She taught her that no woman who had not been contaminated by modern ideas, and had not lost all self-respect, would allow pink and blue ribbons on the underwear of her trousseau. She taught her that even the tiniest bit of a flounce was not permissible on a skirt that was to be worn on the street in the sight of plebeians.

My mother submitted patiently to her aristocratic old friend's counsels and commands. She regretfully told her maid to take all the pink and blue ribbons out of her underwear, and to rip every offending

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flounce from any skirt which a plebeian eye might see.

The countess did not stop at this. She taught my mother to bow from the waist and not from the head, and to courtesy three times backward without getting entangled in her skirt. For, dear American readers, do not forget that we courtesy once to a person of quality, twice to a princess of the blood, and three times to a crowned head. My mother claims emphatically that courtesying has been the hardest thing she has ever had to learn. Bookkeeping, law, beating the drum, and later bringing up seven children have been nothing as compared to that.

The days went on. My mother was learning manners and being bored. Between her good husband and the good countess she had no fun at all. She longed for her father, for her mother, for her friends, and, last but not least, for the drum-major.

## *MOTHER AND HER DOLL*

Nor was she at all consoled by the fact that her husband was showing himself most munificent. He spared no money, and the countess spared neither time nor interest, to fit my mother out with all kinds of rare and beautiful things to wear. Her husband was even planning to give her a whole set of Chantilly laces, which the countess had promised to select with every possible care.

A day was chosen on which my mother, accompanied by the countess, was to make a final choice of these laces. The husband left the money to pay for them with my mother, and the countess was to call for her at the hotel and take her to the shop where the laces were to be bought.

On the morning of the appointed day my mother was alone at the hotel. Her husband had left her. The countess had not yet come, sending word that she could not come until considerably later than she

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had expected. A coupé was waiting at the door—and my mother was bored to death. She felt bitter and rebellious. She had thought that getting married meant going out alone, eating whatever she liked, and doing just as she pleased. And now she was kept much more strictly than she had ever been kept at home. She decided to show her independence as a married woman, to go out alone, and to satisfy the longing which had made her so anxious to come to Paris, a longing which the countess and her husband had declared childish, and had not gratified. The child wished to go to Giroux, the world-famed shop from which for years she had received her Christmas toys.

It was an easy thing to get into the carriage, and order the coachman to drive to Giroux. It was just as easy to get out there, and to ask an affable clerk to show her the finest dolls they had in stock. But

## MOTHER AND HER DOLL

it was not so easy to come away without buying anything. The clerk smirked, bowed, explained, and persuaded "Madame"—for the long dresses and the wedding-ring which showed through her little mitt, proved her right to this title—that she could not possibly leave without taking one of the handsomest dolls.

"But I have no money with me," said my mother, well aware that her husband and the countess would not approve of such a purchase.

"We shall send some one with Madame, and Madame can pay when she gets to the hotel," suggested the clerk.

So she fell. She purchased a doll that could speak and walk, that had real eye-lashes and finger-nails. She wanted the doll, but she really would have refused if the clerk had allowed it. Down in the depths of her heart, however, she was grateful to him because he compelled her



## *A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD*

to do what she knew she should not, but dearly longed to do.

She reached the hotel only a few minutes before the clerk came to deliver the new acquisition, a doll which was meant to be given in homage to some little royal princess, and for which Giroux charged the modest sum of one thousand francs.

My mother paid without hesitancy. She had the money for the laces, and she did not think that a thousand francs more or less would make much difference. Her bookkeeping had not been of the kind to teach her the value of money. The clerk left, well-satisfied with the promptness of the payment, and my mother remained alone with her doll. It was the first time since she left home that she was perfectly happy.

But the countess arrived; she was horrified. How could a young married woman who fully understood the responsi-

## *MOTHER AND HER DOLL*

bilities of her position and what she owed to propriety, go alone to Giroux, buy a doll, and play with it like a little girl of three?

Her husband also soon returned, and he was not only horrified and amazed, he was very angry at the waste of money, and at the childishness of his bride. He scolded her, and he scolded her long and hard.

My mother was a very, very little girl; she had been very lonely, very homesick, and she was not accustomed to have her "good friend," as she still thought of him, speak harshly to her. Until he married her there had, of course, been no necessity for discipline. But she could not reason this out then as she did many, many years later when she told the story to me. Her heart was broken. She wept and she wailed. She wanted to go home. She wanted to see her father and mother. She

## *A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD*

did not want to be married. She wanted to go back to her short dresses, and to her dolls.

Her description was vivid, and I can almost see her as she lay in a big arm-chair, her arm pressed tightly over her eyes, her feet stretched out straight and stiff, and her whole little body shaken with sobs. I can almost see the countess and the husband distressed and perplexed at the situation. It seemed almost impossible to comfort her.

Indeed, what she needed was a mother to take her on her knees and wipe her eyes. Neither the husband nor the countess thought of doing this, and the child kept repeating that she wanted to go home, she wanted to go to her father and mother, she did not want to stay in Paris another single day.

It was her husband who finally comforted her, but this only when he told her

## *MOTHER AND HER DOLL*

that they would leave Paris very, very soon, that nobody should take the doll from her, and that she might keep it with her in the carriage for the rest of the journey.

And so it happened that the little daughter of the consul-general finished her first wedding-trip with a doll on the front seat of the traveling carriage.

SEVERAL years later my mother was left a widow. Then (and I think it served the consul-general just right) she married my father, a brilliant young Italian, a most characteristic representative of the hated Latin race. She took a long wedding-trip. She came home without any doll on the front seat of her carriage, but later on she took another trip with her husband, and this time she had no dolls, but five beautiful, healthy children.



## **VI**

### **MY MOTHER AND HER LAMB**



## VI

### MY MOTHER AND HER LAMB

**T**HERE was another story about my mother which also particularly delighted me.

My great-grandparents lived at Leghorn, and my mother was their oldest and favorite grandchild. From all she has told me herself I deduce that they spoiled her. I never knew any of my grandmothers or great-grandmothers, and I have always regretted it deeply, because I think that had they lived, there would have been some one in the world to pet and spoil me. But this is a digression.

My great-grandparents were wealthy, though they lived in simple style. My great-grandmother was an unusually economical woman, for Italians are not as a



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rule model housekeepers, but she was as thrifty as a New England farmer's wife.

Part of the year they spent on a large estate, where my mother would remain with them for months. There my mother had the happiest time of her life. Her grandmother excused in her what she never excused in any one else, and her grandfather granted her every wish, if it were at all possible. Sometimes he got into trouble by doing so, for my mother was as fond of animals as she was of dolls, and pets introduce into a household an element of disorder of which my great-grandmother sincerely disapproved. But though she would reproach my great-grandfather for having allowed some stray cat or dog to be brought home, still she did not deprive her little granddaughter of the newly acquired treasure.

Once her grandfather took my mother with him on a visit to one of the peasant

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houses that belonged to him. The shepherds had just come down from the mountains with large flocks of sheep, and the natural result of this was that my mother asked for a little lamb.

"Oh, Harriet," said her grandfather, "what will your grandma say? You 'll want to have the lamb in the house, and you know that she will scold. Beside, the lamb will soon grow big, and then what will you do?"

The child evaded the question. She knew she would gain her point if she only kept on coaxing.

"Please, grandpapa, let me have the lamb! Please, grandpapa, let me have the lamb! Please, grandpapa, let me have the lamb!"

Her good grandfather gave in at last, and they drove home with the little lamb nestling in my mother's lap.

But as they neared the villa her grand-

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father began to have qualms of conscience. He was afraid of what might be said when they reached the house with a new pet, after it had been distinctly understood that such a thing would never happen again. He tried to gain time, and persuaded my mother not to take the lamb in at once, but to let him take it down to the vault, where he was to deposit some money several peasants had paid in.

My great-grandfather's villa was very old; in fact, it came very near being a castle. There were subterranean passages and vaults, and in one of these my great-grandfather had a safe in which he used to keep the money paid by the tenants. Sometimes considerable sums were locked away there.

You cannot, of course, have an old house with vaults and subterranean passages without having a ghost, and, in fact, a well-developed ghost was said to

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inhabit these premises. The story connected with it was duly harrowing. They said that many years ago a woman and her baby had been buried alive there, and that on certain nights the moaning of the mother and the wailing of the child could be distinctly heard. Of course the family did not believe in the ghost, but the peasants did.

My mother and her grandfather arrived at the villa at night, and, with the excuse of taking down the money, they took the little lamb to one of the vaults, waiting till morning to introduce it to my great-grandmother, and hoping that by that time some way might be found to mitigate her wrath. My mother took down a soft piece of cloth, and a saucer with bread and milk. She fed the lamb as best she could with a spoon, then covered it up carefully, and reluctantly left it for the night.

It was well known that my great-grand-

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father kept money in the vaults, and the sums which he was said to keep there were grossly exaggerated. This served to tempt some unfortunate peasants who, no doubt, tired of their poverty, made up their minds to break into the vaults and to rob the safe.

In the middle of the night they came stealthily to the villa and, thanks to a carefully elaborated plan, actually succeeded in reaching the place where the safe was kept.

But they had hardly begun to break open the door when they dropped their tools and ran away, for they distinctly heard the moaning of the mother and the wailing of the child, whose spirits they knew haunted the spot.

After a little while their courage returned and they went back. As their steps neared the door the wailing of the child was heard again. Again they fled;

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yet even this time the braver ones thought it mere nonsense, and declared that nothing should keep them from breaking into the vault and getting the money.

But when they tried it the third time, and again began working on the door, the weird wailing was heard again, so distinctly that the men dropped their tools in distress and fled.

Next morning, when my great-grandfather, still much puzzled as to how he was going to break the news to his wife, came to get the lamb, he found not only the tools of the robbers, but a jacket which one of them had dropped in his fright. It served to identify the criminals, who were not professionals, but poor misguided peasants living on the estate. They confessed at once, saying that the ghost had warned them to give up their undertaking, and they described minutely how they had been able to distinguish be-

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tween the moaning of the mother and the wailing of the child.

Now my great-grandfather was a very astute man. He never told that they had heard only the poor little lamb bleating when it heard their footsteps, yearning, perhaps, for the shepherd who would put it back into the fold. The well-established fact that the ghost had been heard (and after awhile, of course, it was said that it was actually seen by the men who attempted to break in) proved a powerful safeguard. It also made it easier for my great-grandfather to tell his wife how the lamb had saved them from being robbed.

My great-grandmother, who was very thrifty—in fact, so thrifty that some people considered her altogether too fond of money—never uttered a word of reproach. The lamb grew into a sheep, and still was allowed to walk around the villa undisturbed.

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Another popular story, which my mother told us often, yet not often enough to satisfy us, was the story of "The Saint."

Any one driving from Pisa to Lucca may see, even to-day, a number of crosses along the roads. They are decorated with the ladder, the lance, the cock, and so forth. Some of them were erected by the Saint who plays the main part in my tale; but no guide-book will tell you about him.

It was some time in the forties that a man with a large following made his appearance in Tuscany. He wandered from place to place, fasting, praying, and planting crosses in honor of the Lord. The people considered him a saint, and followed him in hopes of miracles, though no miracles are recorded. His fasting was extreme, for he was said to live on nothing but bread and water. And, moreover, he submitted himself to one self-inflicted discipline, praised by the Roman Cath-



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olic Church, which my early English training makes me look upon with particular aversion: he never was known to wash. Why this neglect of personal cleanliness, in such opposition to the English law: "Cleanliness is next to Godliness," has grown in the Catholic Church, my historical studies have since explained. But a discussion would be out of place here. An historical item which, however, is interesting, and which does belong here by right, is, that this man was said to have been one of the Terrorists who actively participated in the execution of Louis XVI. Remorse, they said, had pursued him ever since, and had finally made a saint of him.

This "Saint," called "San Gennaro" (do not confuse him with the famous San Gennaro of Naples), finally reached my great-grandfather's estate. The enthusiasm of the people had grown extreme.

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As he went from village to village he was received by the clergy, and the crosses were planted with ever-increasing ceremonies.

My great-grandfather was a religious man, though by no means bigoted; but his wife was extreme in her religion. The reception planned for the wandering Saint was, therefore, a very elaborate one. Even a bishop from one of the neighboring cities was invited to attend, and the country people gathered from far and near. There was to be a procession, followed by a banquet, planned with all the elaborateness which even now is a necessary tribute to men of the church.

My mother says that she was disgusted with the filthiness of the Saint's appearance, and that she did not see how any one could bear to sit next to him at table. She watched him with eager curiosity. While all the other men of God enjoyed

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the good food the Lord had provided for them, San Gennaro abstained from eating and drinking.

He asked for a cup of clear water and a crust of dry bread that he might eat alone in the dining-room when the others had finished their meal. His modest demand was granted, and though only clear water and dry bread was provided for him, my great-grandmother saw to it that the service used for the Saint should be of solid silver. Then every one withdrew, and he was left alone to pray, for so saintly was he, that with him it was not only fasting and constant praying, but eating and constant praying also.

Nor did he spend much time on his crust of bread. In a few minutes he came out of the dining-room, and asked to be taken to the chapel, where he wished to spend an hour in prayer. He was deferentially taken there by my great-grand-

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father, and left to an uninterrupted communion with God, for San Gennaro's request that he should not, under any consideration, be disturbed, had been earnest and emphatic.

I have stated already that my great-grandmother was not only thrifty, but just a wee bit more than thrifty, and when the banquet was over, and her guests disposed of in the parlors and the gardens, she made her way back to the dining-room to see that such provisions as had been left over should be conserved for future needs.

In Italian families what remains of the meats is generally placed on the sideboard, and only cleared away after the guests have left the room. My thrifty great-grandmother did not allow this clearing away till she herself had mentally inventoried what had been left. Her keen eye noticed, too, how much had actually been consumed. It was, therefore, with great

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indignation she found that a whole chicken was missing. She did trust the butler, who had been with them for years and years, and she and the man himself were equally disturbed and troubled at the disappearance of more than half a chicken.

Now my mother had a trick of giving things away—sometimes it would be fruit, sometimes part of a dessert—and the natural conclusion was, that she had grabbed the chicken and distributed it among some of the peasant children. But when the butler called her, and my great-grandmother questioned her, she absolutely denied having done it.

“Harriet,” insisted my great-grandmother, “you know you ’re always doing that kind of thing. Who could have taken it now?”

My mother replied promptly: “The Saint.”

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"What!" said my great-grandmother, raising her hands in horror. "Accuse a holy man of stealing chicken!"

"Well," said my mother, "you did n't take it"; pointing to the butler, "he did n't take it; I know I did n't take it, and the Saint has been in here alone. I don't like him, anyway: he's too dirty."

My great-grandmother, as I have said, was extremely religious, and though she had her favorite grandchild before her, her ire was aroused. She told the child that if she had no more discretion, and no more respect for holy people, she might just as well stay by herself, and as a punishment, she should not be allowed to come into the parlors, or into the garden, till all the guests had left.

My mother said that she thought it very unjust, and she went up-stairs to her room in tears. She wandered around the house

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for awhile, and then, bored, as a child naturally would be, she tried to find something to do.

Finally, she thought that she could amuse herself by watching the Saint at prayer, for there was a small corridor which connected the chapel with the villa, and which had a small window from which she could see all that happened in the chapel itself. So she crept slowly along, and putting her fair little head out of the opening, can you imagine what she saw?

She saw the Saint, not praying, but comfortably seated on the altar steps eating the chicken with his hands!

My mother says that she almost yelled with delight. She rushed down to her grandmother, and whispered excitedly into her ear:

“Grandmama, I know who took the chicken!”

“Sh!” said my great-grandmother, who

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felt rather sensitive about her reputation of being extremely economical. Still, her curiosity was such, that she immediately took her grandchild into another room, and asked for an explanation. Then my mother triumphantly exclaimed:

“Come and see for yourself, grand-mama. Come and see how well your holy man prays.”

My great-grandmother went quietly up through the little corridor, and looked out through the little window. Then she spoke to my great-grandfather, who, after having looked into the chapel, invited the bishop to do likewise. They all understood only too well why San Gennaro had insisted that nobody should enter the chapel while he was holding his communion with God.

My mother was given a basket of candy and fruit to distribute just as she liked among the peasant children. There was



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one condition attached to this gift, and that was that she should not tell what she knew about the Saint.

The Saint mysteriously disappeared. The peasants thought that he had gone away on some holy mission, but the fact is, that the bishop got him quietly out of the way, for fear that if the truth concerning him were fully known, he might be stoned.

The crosses were left standing, and no doubt serve their purpose for whoever prays before them with a simple, earnest heart.

Other stories that my mother would occasionally tell us were quite as thrilling as the one about the Saint. Particularly interesting to us were those of her travels through Italy at the time of the brigands. Can you imagine anything more exciting than arriving at some lonely little inn at night, knowing that the place was not safe,

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because perhaps some rich foreigner had recently been murdered there; having to barricade your room so that if any one tried to rob you, you had a chance to prepare for self-defense; or losing your way as you were trying to find the host so as to give him some orders, and getting into dangerous, forbidden quarters, where through a hole in the floor you could peep into mysterious subterranean vaults and see a post-chaise you recognized as that of some traveler who had recently been known to disappear? These must have been thrilling journeys, indeed, and compared to them, modern travels seem very tame.



## **VII**

### **ON DISCIPLINE AND ITS RESULTS**



## VII

### ON DISCIPLINE AND ITS RESULTS

**M**Y great-aunt used to tell me that as a child my mother was spoiled, and I believe this. If she had been brought up very strictly, she would never have brought up her children so strictly herself. Taking long walks, learning languages, bookkeeping, law, even beating the drum, do not constitute real hardships.

I have a theory of my own on the subject: which is that many things in life are the result of some reaction, and that in their children most people react against what they have suffered themselves. Now, I wish it distinctly understood that my mother really educated us. Nowadays few children are really educated. They

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are generally only allowed to grow up, and that is something altogether different.

In a good many ways her pedagogical theories have been attended with success, and when we try to prove to her now where mistakes have been made, she legitimately shrugs her shoulders and says—"Look at the result." The result satisfies her, and no further discussion is possible.

Whipping constituted the main punishment, and sometimes the chastisement could better be called a flogging rather than a whipping. If we were naughty with the nurses, we were whipped. If we did not learn our lessons, we were whipped. But if perchance, and this happened very seldom, we handled the truth somewhat recklessly, we were flogged. We also were flogged if we in any way struck or otherwise abused an inferior. In the last two cases I think myself that the rod is justly used. Otherwise I sincerely disapprove

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of it. My childhood views on the subject are curiously enough preserved, and will find their place in the next chapter, because they are, I think, of real pedagogical interest, as it is very rare that children write down their impressions and their point of view.

Yet my mother occasionally invented punishments, and these were far more efficacious, and made a far more lasting impression than all the whippings in the world. I never was privileged to have any punishment worthy of being put on record. My oldest brother suffered in two famous instances which the family never forgot.

He was a precocious infant; there is no doubt of that. He read Shakspeare's "Julius Cæsar" with fluency, intelligence, and pleasure at seven. He recited selections from it. (And when my mother, as he was once showing off, remarked that he



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shuffled his feet during his recital, and requested the governess to break this habit, she received the indignant reply: "Madam, you cannot expect me to attend to his head and to his feet at the same time.") At nine he did well in Latin and Greek. At twelve he had composed comparative chronological tables of the history of the world. When, long before he was ready for it in years he was sent for awhile to the public *Ginnasio*, he organized an army of boys, of which he, the youngest, elected himself the general. But when I have said that he was very precocious, I sum up the situation.

He was not, however, without faults, and, as a small boy, one of his great faults was whining. In vain my mother reasoned with him, telling him that he had to be a man, that whining was not even allowed in little girls, much less in a big boy who already wore trousers. It did no

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good. If anything went wrong, Matthew would whine.

My mother threatened: "If you don't stop whining, I'll treat you like a girl."

But Matthew continued to whine. If Totty or Alick displeased him, he would whine. If his lessons were too long, he would whine. If his clothes did not suit him, he would whine.

My mother finally lost patience. One day she took him to the nursery, told the nurse to bring her one of my oldest sister's frocks, and, without giving Matthew the slightest chance to object, made him dress up like a girl from head to foot. Not one piece of dainty underwear was spared. Even his shoes had to be girls' shoes.

His whining subsided to absolute silence. He was not compelled to go back to the school-room, and deeply humiliated, he withdrew into the recess of a

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nursery window. As he was standing there, his back carefully turned to any one who might perchance come in—anxious, if he had dared, to disappear from view altogether—a mild little old woman, our family seamstress, chanced into the room.

She did not know what had happened. Seeing the familiar red plaid of my sister's dress, she gently walked up to the dress, and caressing one sleeve lightly, said: "Miss Totty, are you ill? Are you not taking any lessons to-day?"

The answer was an angry yell. My brother thought it had been a deliberate insult. He rushed past the astonished woman, fled into the garden, and hid among the trees.

That broke him of whining. He never had to wear girls' clothes again.

Another punishment remained more famous still. This I witnessed, awe-stricken, myself.

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A precocious infant has an active mind; an active mind involves thinking in every direction, and, for a child, thinking in every direction involves mischief, and mischief of a most unexpected kind. One of the most strictly enforced rules of our childhood was that we should have nothing to do with any of the servants except the nurses. Imagine, therefore, what a horrible thing it was when my brother (even if he did not know what led him to do it) actually went into the maids' bedroom, and hid under one of the beds. When the maids were dressing he leaped out with a yell, and they were frightened to death.

When this was reported to my mother she was at a loss for a punishment. She must have known that we had grown hardened to whippings, and even a flogging did not seem enough for a misdemeanor like this. Then a brilliant idea came to

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her. She found something that the family would never forget.

She called my brother to her, and said: "I have always treated you like a boy and a gentleman, because I thought that was what you preferred, but if you prefer to live like a dog, why, by all means, we will let you live like a dog. You must admit that only a dog would crawl under a bed and bark the way you did. But if you want to be a dog, you must be one consistently whenever it is possible, and I shall see to it that every opportunity is given you."

We were in the country then, and not only "the children," but even I, ate with my father and mother—at the table, of course. But this day, when we came into the dining-room, only three children's places were set. Matthew's place was set on the floor. My mother was inexorable. The butler placed his plate on the floor

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before him, and every little while he would be cheered by my mother's remark: "I hope you enjoy living like a dog."

This was done for three days. After that he was allowed to resume a normal life, but I know that he never hid under a bed again.

Ritchie used to lose his temper, and when his temper was lost he would not reason. My mother impressed the undesirability of lack of reasoning on him in the following way:—

She said: "If you want to say things that have no sense, all right, but first I want to see if I cannot cure you by an indigestion of senseless talk. You must go into the garden, stand straight under one of the big trees, and for one whole hour move your arms up and down, saying: 'Wooden shoes up, wooden shoes down—Wooden shoes up, wooden shoes down—Wooden shoes up, wooden shoes

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down.' If this does not suit you, you can come to me and tell me you do not like to say things that have no sense."

I must add that it did help Ritchie to control his temper, but he held out for an hour saying—"Wooden shoes up, wooden shoes down"—without giving in.

When he was very, very little, not more than five, Ritchie got into the habit of saying—"If you won't let me do so and so, I 'll kill myself."

My mother spoke to him very gravely, and said: "You have no right to kill yourself, because, till you are twenty-one, you are not your own master."

Then Ritchie, with a peculiarly German exactness and conscientiousness, would say: "If you won't let me do so and so, when I 'm twenty-one I 'll kill myself."

Baby one day unexpectedly broke in with the remark: "Why, if you kill your-

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self when you are twenty-one, you are a thief."

"Why am I a thief?" Ritchie asked indignantly.

Then Baby with calm superiority explained: "Because you 'll steal a soldier from the King."

Baby, too, was precocious. He died when he was hardly four years old, and yet we all remember him as having a distinct personality.

My mother and the governesses did not understand Ritchie at all. He was a passionate, yet extremely affectionate child, who needed tender care. No doubt, many times the governess was to blame when Ritchie got into a passion. As he grew older he did not say—"When I 'm twenty-one I 'll kill myself," but "I am going to run away."

My mother then would say: "All right, run away; but your clothes are mine.



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You came into your home naked, and naked you shall leave it."

Then Ritchie would plead: "One little old pair of trousers!"

"No," my mother would say, "it is not good for you to run away. I cannot let you have even one little old pair of trousers for such a purpose. You can have all the clothes you want, if you stay here."

And Ritchie would plead: "One little old pair of trousers!"

Though I was very little then myself, I saw nothing funny in this. The recollection of those scenes hurts me to this day. I myself should never have argued about a pair of trousers, if I had intended to run away. I knew that running away was wrong, and that running away with a pair of trousers, even if they did not belong to me, did not make it much worse. I should never have argued the way he did. I used to feel like telling him so, but I never did,

## *DISCIPLINE AND RESULTS*

because I loved him very dearly, I hated to see him cry, and I did n't want him to run away.

It was Ritchie, however, who finally best illustrated the glorious results of my mother's discipline. His chief fault was that he would interrupt any one whenever he had something to say. My mother repeatedly told him: "Ritchie, you must never interrupt me when I am talking. Wait till I have finished, and then say: 'At your convenience, mama, I have something to tell you.' Take time; learn to be polite!"

One day toward the end of the season my mother had taken Ritchie and me to The Baths at Leghorn. The Baths are built in piers and rotundas into the sea (we have no tide at Leghorn), and these piers are connected by bridges. Before the autumn storms begin the boards are taken away, so that only two long wooden beams

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and the railings remain. There was absolutely no danger in walking across these bridges on the beams, as we could have all necessary support from the railings, and it was great fun for us to do so.

Now, I had crossed one of these bridges quite a distance from where my mother and some friends were sitting in a group. I had walked around the rotunda, and had stood some time watching a man as he fished. But finally I grew tired of watching, and just as I had left him, and was about to cross the bridge on the beam, he called to me, because he had caught a fish. I waited till the fish was safely landed, and then started to cross the bridge. But so interested was I in the man's success, that I forgot that the boards had been taken away, and walking on as usual, fell into the sea with a splash.

Ritchie, who was standing by me, instead of taking the slightest concern as to

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what would happen to me, rapidly crossed the bridge, and ran to my mother. Taking off his cap, the little fellow stood politely beside her for some time, waiting till she had finished a rather long story she was just telling. Then he said:

"Mama, at your convenience, I have something to tell you."

"What is it?" said my mother approvingly, for she appreciated that he had finally learned to be so polite.

"Mama, at your convenience, Lisi has fallen into the water."

"What!" said my mother, jumping up. "Has any one pulled her out?"

Then Ritchie calmly and politely said: "I don't know, but I did not interrupt your story—and she can swim!"



**VIII**  
**A CHILD'S POINT OF VIEW**



## VIII

### A CHILD'S POINT OF VIEW

**O**FF and on when I was a child I kept a diary. Or perhaps I should not say that I kept a diary, but rather that occasionally I would set down in writing my reflections on people and things. A few sheets have been preserved. I had no elaborate books to write in, but sheets of foolscap paper that I had sewed together myself. No eyes but mine saw these writings. Even my brothers did not know of their existence. The language in which these diaries were kept varied. At certain periods I was fond of writing French, at other times I wrote English or Italian, and very seldom, though it was the language that I was most familiar with in writing, did I write



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German. English, as I have explained, was my first language, Italian was my native tongue, German was the language of the school-room, and French, I can say, I taught myself out of a spirit of contradiction.

I think that the Franco-German war has not yet been forgotten, and that the dislike of the Germans for the French is still strong. It was very strong in our school-room, and, indeed, unreasonable. We had to learn French, because it scarcely could be omitted from our education, but it was a sorely neglected subject, and nobody cared whether we made progress in it or not. The result was that we grew to love to read, to write, and to speak French. My diaries show no careful training. My agreement of words is something wonderful and fearful, but I wrote along fluently, feeling that my governesses, had they known I wrote, would

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have preferred me to write in some other tongue. I have never understood why a special rule was made in my behalf which forbade me to read the Bible in French. Since I only read it in time of recreation, and did not let it encroach upon my studies, I do not see how it could possibly be considered a misdemeanor because I happened to want to read the Word of God in French. But I was forbidden to do so.

This may explain why certain pages of my diaries that are particularly rebellious are all in French. One little essay, written when I was not yet thirteen, bears the title, *Apropos de battre les enfant* (sic). As this title tells us, I aired my views upon corporal punishment for children. I shall give it in an almost literal translation, preserving the punctuation, which is curious. The comments in parentheses are added to the translation now.

# A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD

## CONCERNING THE BEATING OF CHILDREN

Last night we spoke of the Prince of Naples. My mother says that when he is naughty he should be whipped. I do not see how she can even have this idea. She said he was no more than another child. *Comment donc!* Has my mother's royalism taken flight? It is true that he is just like any other child. He has two legs two arms a nose etc. etc. But will you make no difference between the child who should be brought up to command all the other children and all the other children who ought all to be brought up to obey him. And then strike the future King! Great God! I only ask if it is possible! The person of the King is sacred! It is absolutely impossible to strike the heir of the throne. Papa does not think as Mama does. But now about children in general. I do not think that boxing the ears at the right time can do any harm. But corporal punishment should be used with discretion if not one gets used to it. There was a time when Mama whipped us for the least thing for the least little quarrel between us. After having been whipped in such a way that we kept the marks for many many days we began to quarrel harder than ever to decide who had cried least, and our joy knew no bounds if sometimes we had taken a whipping without wincing. And if we were threatened with a whipping we simply thought. *Je ne*

## A CHILD'S POINT OF VIEW

*m'en mocque pas mal.* [The equivalent of this in English would be "I do not care a snap of my fingers," though the French term is spicier.] Only then I did not say this in French for I did not speak French as much as I do now but the result is the same. But another point, is it permissible for a mother to strike her children in public?

I think not.

Twice my mother has struck me in public And . . . I have not forgotten it yet. Once it was before more than twenty persons of our acquaintance!! And do you want to know why. I was with a friend Blanch. My friend was speaking. My mother told us not to speak so loud. Blanch lowers her voice, after about a quarter of an hour she had forgotten my mother's request and spoke just as loud as before. What does Mama do. She calls me to her and boxes my ears repeatedly saying "*Ich werde dir lehren mir nicht zu gehorchen.*" "I shall teach you not to obey me." [This translation of the German sentence is in the original.] I did not expect them (the boxes on the ears) and I felt the blood mount to my face, and I leaned against a chair. It was so sudden but I controlled myself and I simply said Thank you Mama!—and I went back to my place. And my mother who turns to the lady sitting next to her saying "You see how I treat my children when they do not obey me." Everybody when they saw my ears boxed you

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might say without any cause had exchanged glances. However since I had not rebelled but on the contrary I had taken everything so calmly the *beau rôle* remained to me and later when my mother was not there they tried to comfort me but I refused their pity through pride and perhaps through vanity. My father was traveling in France then or perhaps I might have complained to him. But I have not yet either forgotten or forgiven. Another time it was on the street coming home from The Baths. This time hardly any one saw it. Now this action has so much humiliated me being struck before so many people it was terrible for me. I think that for four or five days I hated my mother. That is why I think that to strike in public may have bad consequences 1. This time I had done no wrong and my mother committed an injustice. 2. She awakened in me a thousand rebellious thoughts etc. etc.

If I have not spoken of this to my father it is because I did not wish him to have more cares than he already has and I was sure that he would not have approved Mama. Besides I hope that when I have children of my own, if I ever have any, I will behave better.

If all children wrote unreservedly their impressions about the punishments re-

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ceived, it would no doubt be a great aid to pedagogy. The extract quoted above is not remarkable for style, or a mastery of the language, though it is written fluently in a foreign tongue, but it surely is remarkable as a calm exposition of the impressions received on being justly or unjustly punished. There is no doubt in my mind that most children get hardened to corporal punishment, and that it is effective only when it is used as an exception and not as a rule.

About the same time I wrote another little essay, also in French, which bore the title: *Moi et Louis XVII.*

### I AND LOUIS XVII

My brothers made fun of me because I love this unhappy little King so much. But I openly admit that I love him, that I admire him, that I adore him! And you will see if I am not right! Once I was ten or eleven years old. I had the whooping-cough. I had no governess. I was allowed to re-

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main at home with the permission of going on The Baths where I did not find the most suitable company, or remaining at home where the company I found was only novels—besides I had already read altogether too much. You can imagine what I should have become! Either I should have acquired the manners of a fisherman or I should have lost my head over novels. Once I remembered in reading the “Chevalier de Maison-Rouge” of Dumas that there was in Mama’s library a book called “Louis XVII.” I took it and I began to read. Against my habit I read slowly. I thought over almost every sentence I read. The charm of the little Prince struck me in the first volume. His courage, his martyrdom in the second. I put aside the novels and I took this book. All my thoughts centered on this one point. At night I dreamed about him. During the day I wrote poems to him. You laugh don’t you? Perhaps you are right. Even on my religion the child-king has had a great influence. To see how this child in spite of bad treatment and all efforts to corrupt him always remained a good Christian and a good son made much more impression on me than the ancient and the new Testament. Simon asked him *Capet what would you do if the Vendéans delivered you* and he answers always remembering the last recommendations of his fathers *I should forgive you*. [This last sentence is underscored twice for em-

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phasis.] After having been slowly tortured and seeing himself drawn step by step to the tomb he still forgives! Another time his torturer wanted to oblige him to cry The Republic is eternal! But Louis XVII refuses with royal pride. They strike him, he cries out: don't you know that there is nothing eternal and at night Simon finds him weeping bitterly. Simon stops, the savage Republican cannot help being moved. The child goes up to his jailor and says sobbing: *Forgive me. I was mistaken this morning when I said that there was nothing eternal, God is eternal but there is none but He who is so!* Could anyone be more Christian than he was? My object in religion was to be as good a Christian as he. What I admired still more was his filial love, and his gratitude. When after much suffering he had a jailor who was a little less cruel what did he ask for! His mother. Dr. Naudin protected him against bad treatment he wished to thank him. He had nothing to give him, he kept a pear from his supper, what a poor gift for the King of France. The child gave this pear to the Doctor the old man found no words to thank him but a tear fell on the hand of the little Prince. And what are words compared to a tear. . . . Even on my instruction the child-king had his influence by continually composing poems and by writing I have progressed in my French and the desire to know more has awakened



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within me. I have asked Mama to give me French lessons. Mama has consented. Judge now if I am not right to love him. I hope that for my birthday Mama will give me this book and I shall be as careful of it as I know how.

He has awakened all my royalist sentiments therefore long live Louis XVII who makes me cry long live the King, the Queen and the Prince of Naples. I wish that everyone might have a Louis XVII for certainly many people would be happier than they are now.

This requires an explanation. I have mentioned that when I was nine or ten years old one governess let me swallow German novels wholesale. Curiously enough once the fact had been established that I had read more novels than was good for me, instead of restricting my reading, I was practically allowed to read almost anything I liked, on the basis that I had read so much trash already that a little more, a little less, could not do me much harm. The influence of the book on Louis XVII (by Monsieur de Beau-

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chesne) has, indeed, been even greater than I realized at the time. Is it not curious, however, that a child should read novels with eagerness, and at the same time realize better than the adults evidently did how unwise such reading was? I may also add that my own education during these years was somewhat neglected, principally because the financial condition of the family began to be most unsatisfactory, and while the studies of the boys, who had to be prepared for military school, could not be interrupted, something was saved by keeping no governess for me. Again I was allowed novels so that I might keep busy and quiet.



**IX**  
**LEAVES IN THE STORM**



## IX

### LEAVES IN THE STORM

**V**ICTOR HUGO, in writing of himself as a child, says:

When the north-wind strikes the throbbing waves  
The convulsive ocean tosses at one time  
The three-decked ship thundering with the storm  
And the leaf escaped from the tree on the shore.

We, too, were leaves in the great storm, the storm of the religious and political upheaval in Italy, for our life began but a short while after Italy had been made one, while the country was still suffering in the efforts to adjust the old with the new.

The religious phase of our life was most affected by this unsettled condition of our environment. It is here that the direct influence of historical events shows most

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clearly. A brief account of our family history is necessary for a full understanding of the situation and certain incidents that I am going to relate. This history is not without poetical interest. I may add, however, that whatever is known to me on the subject I have found out for myself. The reserve about anything that would have led us to be proud of our race and our position was almost ostentatious.

The famous chronicles of Malaspini mentions the Cipriani among the sixteen families who founded Florence. Five of these families, including our own, were all agnates, and descended from Galigaio, a Roman patrician, who, the chronicles tell us, was a companion-in-arms of Julius Cæsar, and assisted him in the Siege of Fiesole.

The names of these five branches lend some probability to this Roman origin, though we, of course, know that during

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the Middle Ages the nobility of central Italy took pride in descending from the Romans, whereas the nobles of northern Italy preferred to trace their descent back to the twelve peers of Charlemagne. We found out this presumed Roman origin by ourselves, and the fact that it was almost forbidden knowledge made us particularly delight in our discovery.

Malaspini mentions our family sometimes as Cipriani, and sometimes as Della Pressa, a name which, by the way, is also given us in the modern *Annuary*. The Cipriani were staunch Ghibellines and good fighters. Dante, under the name of Della Pressa, in the Sixteenth Canto of the *Paradiso*, mentions us where he says: "The Della Pressa already knew how it behooves to rule and in Galigaio's house the hilt and the pommel were already gilt." This passage, because it was in Dante, we, of course, knew.



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When the Ghibellines were defeated by the Guelphs, the Cipriani were among those who preferred exile to humiliation. They would neither renounce their prerogatives and enroll in a Guild, nor change their name.

Thirteen Cipriani, history tells us, were captured by the Guelphs and condemned to death. Twelve of these escaped, and only one, Capaccio, remained in their hands. Perhaps the name (Capaccio means bad head) was fatal. He was beheaded on the Canto di Capaccio, that to this day bears his name, and is opposite the beautiful balcony of Palazzo dell'Arte della Seta, designed by Vasari.

Then my grim Ghibelline fathers went into exile. One branch settled in France, but died out. The other settled on the Northern promontory of Corsica, Capo Corso, where our branch of the family remained till the beginning of the nineteenth

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century, when my grandfather, Matteo Cipriani, came back to Italy. It was he who bought the villa at Leghorn, where we spent the happiest days of our childhood.

To this Corsican influence I trace certain pronounced family characteristics, principally tenacity and endurance. The environment under which our race developed during these centuries was, I think, a distinctly desirable one. We never became court nobility, and we were thus saved from the excesses to which the European nobles gave themselves up from the Renaissance to the French Revolution. Moreover, it endowed us with exceptionally good physical constitutions, for the development of the body was in every way favored by the rough out-of-door Corsican life.

The life we led during all these years in Corsica was no doubt primitive compared

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to the luxury that reigned at the French and Italian courts, and we remained very near the Middle Ages. I can almost say that in our family we skipped the Renaissance.

When my grandfather returned to Italy the family, in spite of its long absence from Florence, resumed its place at once among the Florentine patricians. Moreover, the marriages contracted by my aunts, and the daughters of another Cipriani, who had returned to Italy at the same time my grandfather did, connected us by close family ties with Italians of our own rank. I do not think that my father ever realized that his family had just returned to Italy after an absence not of years, but of centuries. We children, of course, never felt this at all, though we were very proud of our Corsican connections.

My Ghibelline fathers went into volun-

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tary exile. When they came back the struggle of the country against the church and the rulers the Roman Church supported, had not ended. It is true that the Guelph and Ghibelline parties had long disappeared. It is true that no German emperor was upheld against the head of the church. But the ideal of Dante, of an Italian strong and free, untrammelled by the selfish bonds of the church and petty rulers, had lived on.

It seems only poetic justice that when, after their long exile, these Ghibellines returned to the cradle of their race, they should successfully finish the task their fathers had begun. My uncles and my father all fought bravely and unselfishly for the freedom of Italy, and their party finally conquered. Italy became one. And the man who, as governor, first ruled the provinces wrenched from the Pope, the very provinces that a thousand years

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ago Pepin had granted, thus establishing the temporal power of the church—the man was my uncle.

Am I not justified in seeing a grim poetry in this? The Guelphs conquered us; they pulled down our palaces, and leveled them to the ground, strewing salt over them; they drove us into exile, so that even women and children faced every hardship; and at last, after hundreds of years had passed, we came back and in turn conquered our conquerors.

In 1859 my uncle was Governor of the Romagne. It was then, I think, that he and my father seceded from the Roman Catholic Church. In my father's case this was much more marked, because he married a Protestant, and decided to have his children brought up in their mother's faith, though curiously enough we were all christened in the Catholic Church. Personally I have always regretted this

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secession, for I think that we would have been much happier if we had grown up in the same religion as our friends and relatives.

The religious question was, therefore, a burning one in my childhood. Relatives, friends, servants, all were Catholics. My mother was a Protestant, it is true, but with her exception we met few Protestants, except the governesses and the tutors, and I confess that I antagonistically associated Protestantism with them.

Our religious training was a curious one. They did not try to teach us what to believe, but rather instructed us carefully as to what we ought not to believe. We were told not to believe in saints, miracles, and relics. We were told that Catholicism stands for ignorance. This last statement, however, soon aroused grave doubts in my mind, since many of the persons I esteemed and admired most were Catho-

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lics. We were told that it was absurd for a priest to give absolution; that confession was an evil thing. And we listened in silence.

I was the skeptic of the family. After having been told how many things I was not to believe, I learned to be ready to disbelieve any one and anything, even what my mother told me; not that I thought she lied, but I simply took it for granted that she considered it best to tell us just that, and I did not dispute her right to do so.

I remember distinctly that one morning, when I was barely five years old, my mother sent for Ritchie and me. After having had our faces well scrubbed and clean pinafores put on, we were taken to her morning-room. Then she formally began our religious instruction. Up to this time I had only been made to learn the Lord's Prayer in English; and I rattled it

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off with very little concern as to what it meant. This morning my mother told us that there was a God. She also told us that this God was perfect, all-powerful, and everywhere at once. This last seemed incredible to me, and so she explained that he was everywhere, and could see everything. No matter where a thing happened he knew about it. This information she considered enough for the first lesson, and we were sent back to the nursery.

It happened that this very day I saw Ritchie throw a little embroidered waist on the top of the mosquito-netting that hung around our little beds, and when the nurses were looking for the jacket and Ritchie vouchsafed no information, having perhaps forgotten what he had done, I thought the time had come for a conclusive experiment. I thought I had my chance to prove whether this Protestant God they told me about was any better



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than the scorned saints painted on the walls.

I spoke no word while the nurses were hunting. I did not cry out, as I should have at any other time, "Ritchie hid it." No, indeed; I waited for the good Lord to tell. At night on drawing out the mosquito-netting the little jacket was found. Then I informed the nurses I knew it was there. This led to the belief that I had hidden it there myself. I occasionally did hide things, and their suspicion was not altogether unjustified. But this time I declared that I had not put it there; Ritchie had done so, and it was unfair to punish me. They took me to my mother to be punished, for she inflicted all punishments herself, and there I burst into tears, and tried in vain to explain that I thought God, who saw everything, and could do anything he wanted, should have told the nurses himself.

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My mother and the nurses did not understand the situation at all. I was severely punished, and left to my thoughts. As I have mentioned already, it was my habit to boil inside, so after having wiped my eyes, I took my punishment bravely, but I remained a skeptic in the bottom of my heart.

This skepticism was all the more profound as I never expressed it, and it remained unsuspected and uncorrected. In a thoroughly skeptical spirit did I begin the regular study of Bible history when I was not yet eight years old. But there were complications.

I had a governess then, the only one among many of whom I have an absolutely pleasant recollection, Fraeulein Anna, a charming girl of about twenty, who must have been an exceptionally good teacher. But—fate willed it—she was the daughter of a well-known German

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socialist, who was an atheist. Though I heard the details about her life and her family only much later, when I was almost grown up, yet even at the time I knew that her father was something terrible, a socialist who did not believe in God, and that she had been baptized with champagne. This did not shock me. Indeed, I connected it in my mind with the launching of a ship, a frequent festive event in the ship-yards at Leghorn, and I liked her all the better for not having been baptized with plain water like other common mortals.

Again you might say, "How could your mother, if she wished you to have any religion at all, trust you to the daughter of an atheist?" And I can answer, to begin with my mother's religion was a passive one. She did not want us to be Catholics, but her real interest in religious questions seemed to end there. Besides,

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Fraulein Anna did not profess atheism herself, and she had been put in our house by the German Protestant clergyman at Leghorn. He was a fine old man and my mother had great confidence in him.

Fraulein Anna was perhaps the only governess who did not attack Catholicism, but she did not go beyond this. She carefully made me learn the Bible history. She made sure that I knew the names of the patriarchs and their sons, and that I did not confuse the deluge with the Tower of Babel. She was, in fact, the first one who taught me how to study, something for which I am grateful to this day. If I asked any questions, she answered the practical ones, and dismissed any that would have led to a theological discussion. With prompt kindness she would get a map, and, at my desire, show me the exact position of the Red Sea, but she had

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nothing to say when I wanted to know why Eve should be punished for eating the apple before she had been taught to distinguish between right and wrong—a simple question, one which has puzzled many besides myself.

Some points troubled me much. How could God make the world out of nothing? If he had even had a little grain of dust, he might have made it grow, but to make something out of nothing, and be everywhere at the same time; these were things I could not understand. With Eve I deeply sympathized. I reasoned that it was not fair play. If she knew what was right and what was wrong, she might be punished, but before she really knew that a thing was wrong, she did not deserve to be punished. This, of course, was in accordance with our own nursery rules, for if we did anything we had been forbidden to do, the punishment was severe, but a

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first offense, when we could honestly say we did not know it was wrong, was always at least half-forgiven.

If I dwell upon these details, it is not because I consider myself particularly interesting as an individual, but because I am convinced that my experience is that of many children who grow up in a religion different from that of the people around them, especially if, for any reason, their religious interest is keen. Mine was great, and continued intense for many years. I do not think that my brothers and sisters troubled about religious questions the way I did. They all, I think, found it easier to obey in the spirit and in the word. They were told that it was best for them not to be Catholics, and to be Protestants, and that sufficed.

Three years passed after Fraeulein Anna first taught me Bible history. The governess whom I have already men-

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tioned with particular dislike was with us then. As I have explained, she was always arbitrary and often unreasonable. Moreover, she lacked even elementary tact. I did not respect her. Her attitude toward religious questions was such that in telling about them now I must expect to be accused of exaggeration.

She encouraged my brother Alick to make fun of the priests. This was and is only too common in Italy among a certain set of people, and particularly among the men of the lower classes. To Fraeulein it may have seemed funny and new, but I thought then, and I think now, that it was absolutely inexcusable.

She used to like to go to the Duomo at Pisa to listen to the beautiful music at vesper services. We children were not particularly musical, and in order to keep us from being bored, she had taught us to nickname the canons as they sat in their

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seats in the altar circle. This, it seems to me, was all the worse, because we as Protestants should have been taught to respect the ministers of another religion. And, besides, merely the respect due old age made it wrong for us to nickname them according to their resemblance to a horse, or a dog, or a rabbit, or a fox, etc. So well trained were we not to complain of our governesses, that my mother did not know of this till years later.

It was with this governess, Fraeulein Helene, that the climax for me came, and that I cast off both Catholicism and Protestantism, turning to the older faith that the Christians had crushed. One day I found an old piece of newspaper that contained the following item:—"Last night, under the influence of Bacchus, some soldiers changed a temple of Venus into a temple of Mars. The police promptly interfered."



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When a young reporter expressed in this flowery way the drunken brawl of some soldiers, he surely had no conception of how it would for years affect the inner life of a little Florentine patrician.

Greek mythology was perfectly familiar to us. In fact, playing the gods was one of our common games. We all had been given a name of some Greek god or goddess. An older boy, who occasionally used to play with us, was Jove; my sister Totty was Minerva; Ritchie was Mercury, because he was constantly sent on errands; and I, to my bitter sorrow, was Proserpina. I protested with tears against this, because they had called a boy whom I detested Pluto, and even in a game I did not want to be considered his wife. But, as I have already remarked, childhood is cruel. "The children," being the oldest, had taken upon themselves the right of distributing the parts, and did not

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care whether they spoiled my pleasure or not. When I appealed to my mother, her decision was: "Why, your not liking your husband makes your part all the more natural." And so I had to keep my name.

Of course, we had been told that the Greek gods were no longer worshiped; yet the statement in print was absolute. I knew the words by heart—"Under the influence of Bacchus, some soldiers changed a temple of Venus into a temple of Mars." The police had interfered because—because, no doubt, the police did not wish the soldiers to worship the Greek gods any more than our governesses wished us to pray to the saints. The thing was perfectly clear to me. I realized that once again knowledge had been withheld from us. The Greek gods still had their worshippers.

As I thought the matter over my eager-

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ness to have the worship of the Greek gods openly established and not interfered with by the police grew greater and greater.

I have forgotten to mention, in telling the family history, that Malaspini states that one of my ancestors married a granddaughter of Octavian, the Emperor. Now follows my childish reasoning. If we descended from Octavian, the Emperor, through him we went back to Julius Cæsar; from Julius Cæsar we went back to Æneas; from Æneas evidently we went back to Venus; from Venus we went back to Saturn! When the Greek gods loom large again we, who actually had descended from them, would come into our own; and they that ruled us had kept us ignorant of this, just as they had kept us ignorant of other things concerning our family that we might justly be proud of. I longed for the time when I should be

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grown up, and could bring about the open worship of the Olympians.

For a long time my interest in this was keen, but as I never spoke about it to any one, finally I almost forgot the whole story. It only came back to me when many, many years after I came across the same trite expression in referring to some drunken soldiers' brawl.

But I have not waited for the gods in vain. They have come to me in all their classical splendor, though not as I had looked forward to them as a child. In art and literature I have finally come to my own. They have opened a glorious new world to me, where I can find refuge whenever the modern, Protestant world seems too cold, too barren, too hard.



# **X**

## **TERESA AND THE CAT**



## X

### TERESA AND THE CAT

**O**N the whole we were very obedient, and seldom broke the numerous rules and regulations of the school-room. But we were after all children, real children, and once in a while we fell from grace, which, of course, was not without disastrous consequences.

My brother Alick, the best of us all, was the one who got into trouble most frequently. As his nurse expressed it, he did one thing thinking of the next, and it always implied mischief. It was Alick who kicked a hole in the wall under his desk. It was Alick who stuck his whole finger in the ink bottle, was scolded, cried, and wiped his eyes with the inky finger. They could not rub the ink out of him for



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several days. It was Alick who deliberately walked into the sea and sat down in the water to his chin, because he did not want to wear kilts.

He wore a perfect Scotch suit, kilts, pouch, cap, pumps, and stockings reaching below the knee. In one stocking on state occasions he was allowed to put a real dagger. The dagger was Corsican, but everything else was truly Scotch, and came straight from England. When Alick was first promoted to trousers only one suit was made for him, and he was not expected to wear it every day. It nearly broke his heart to be put back into skirts after having tasted of trousers, but his objections were, as usual, of no avail. He was told that he would have to wear out his kilts. When he went out walking with the governess, and Matthew and Totty, and they reached the seashore, where they often were allowed to play in the sand,

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Alick deliberately walked into the water and sat down. He had turned the matter over in his mind, and had reached the conclusion that if he spoiled one suit a day, the time for him to wear trousers could not be postponed very long.

Teresa, an old woman who helped in the kitchen, and a pet cat, once inspired Alick to a piece of mischief that later he heartily regretted. The old woman was a poor, ignorant, superstitious creature. The cat was a beautiful white Angora, with very long hair, a big fluffy tail, and forget-me-not blue eyes. It had been given us by Countess R——, a great friend of ours. Count R—— was at the time on the special staff of King Humbert, and at royal request, he had brought a brother of our kitten to Rome for Queen Margaret. Our cat was, therefore, really a well-connected cat.

Alick was standing in the garden when

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the old woman passed, and stopped to admire the cat. She said in an admiring tone: "Signorino, what a beautiful cat. Sant Antonio bless it!"

The blessing of Sant Antonio was necessary, for the Tuscans never admire an animal without calling his blessings upon it, nor do they ever admire a child without calling upon it the blessings of the Lord. We had been well drilled in this ourselves. When in our walks we stopped at the peasant houses the peasants usually showed us their oxen, and then we were expected to say: "Sant Antonio bless them!" And when we saw a baby we were also expected to say: "God bless it!" This in order to keep off the evil eye. It was I who made the never-forgotten break of looking at a baby, and sweetly saying: "Sant Antonio bless it," which, "the children" claimed, mortally offended the peasant.

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Alick should not have spoken with the old woman at all, much less should he have indulged in the opportunity of imposing upon her superstitious credulity. But he disregarded rules and answered: "It is n't a real cat. We only call it so because so rare an animal does not have a name of its own."

"Why, Signorino, what is it?"

"It is a cross between a white bantam chicken and a poodle."

The woman looked in amazement. Angora cats were unknown in the vicinity, and the blue eyes of ours had caused a good deal of comment. Besides, the cat was an exceptionally intelligent creature; it had learned to jump through hoops, stand upright, and in fact, perform a lot of tricks which popular tradition states cats can never learn, so, to a certain extent, the ground was prepared for my brother's statements.

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"Moreover," Alick continued, "this creature is brother to the cat of the Queen, and you must not speak of it, or address it, as plain 'cat,' but always as Signor Gatto. You must never pass in front of it because it is an animal of royal blood, and if you ever do, they will throw you in jail at once."

Our intercourse with the servants was so restricted that they may have looked upon us with a certain awe—distance is known to lend enchantment. This may account for the undue weight my brother's words had with the credulous old woman. The respect she afterward showed the cat was a source of great amusement to us children, and none of us undeceived her. Perhaps her fellow-servants were just as amused as we were and strengthened the poor old woman in her belief. It is not difficult to imagine that the men in the servants' hall thor-

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oughly enjoyed it when she asked them whether the Signorino was right when he said that the cat was a cross between a bantam chicken and a poodle. Tuscans have a sense of humor.

One day my father asked to have dinner served earlier than usual. The cook, who sought to obey, sent Teresa to the vegetable garden to get some fresh lettuce. A little iron gate led from the garden proper, upon which the kitchen opened, to this vegetable garden, and as Teresa was coming back with a basket full of lettuce, she found that "Signor Gatto" had established himself on the threshold of the gate. She was going to brush by in a hurry, when she noticed that my father was walking up and down in the garden smoking. Then she remembered my brother's recommendations, and tried to carry them out to the letter. "Signor Gatto," she said apologetically, "excuse

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me. I had not seen you. Will you please let me through?"

The cat on hearing her voice filled the whole space of the little gateway, arching its back, putting up its tail and purring. Teresa most politely repeated: "Signor Gatto, will you please let me through?"

The cat continued to balance itself on the threshold, and the woman in a more imploring tone: "Signor Gatto, will you please let me through?"

By this time her voice had attracted my father's attention, and he stopped to watch her. This probably embarrassed her, and she grew excited. She pleaded more vehemently: "Signor Gatto, will you please let me through? The *Signor Generale* wants dinner earlier, and I am in a hurry. Signor Gatto, I beseech you! I do not want to offend you, but I really must get through. The cook will scold. Signor Gatto, I *implore* you! Will you

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please step aside. Dinner is going to be very late, and the *Signor Generale* will scold."

My father, who evidently could not understand the situation, and who, moreover, was absolutely lacking in a sense of humor, spoke to her with sharp impatience: "What on earth are you talking about?"

Then she was terrorized. She thought that my father had noticed how she was going to brush by the cat, and that this might land her in jail. So she began in a wailing tone: "*Signor Generale*, I have always said '*Signor Gatto*,' and I have never stepped in front of the cat—I beg your pardon, I mean the *Signor Gatto*. I am a poor woman. I mean no harm. Surely you won't let me go to jail."

My father succeeded in calming Teresa's fears, and making her give a connected explanation, which proved my



## A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD

brother flagrantly guilty, not only of having talked with her, when it was distinctly understood that we should hold no conversation with any of the servants, but also of having invented such a colossal whopper. (The English dictionary says that this word is colloquial, but it expresses exactly what I mean.)

Alick got the soundest of sound whippings, but Providence had endowed us children with all the sense of humor she had saved from my father's make-up, and I am sure my brother felt that the whipping was a slight fee to pay for the fun we all got out of the story. The mere mention of "Signor Gatto" would for months afterward suffice to make us roar with laughter. I am sure that Southerners must know darkies capable of the same credulity as Teresa.

Teresa went to Florence with us once when my sister was old enough not only

## TERESA AND THE CAT

to take charge of the household, but also to be interested in the elevation of the masses. Like my mother, she had theories, theories which were put into practice with surprising results.

My sister had made kitchen rules, and one of these was that the servants should once a week be allowed time to see the Florence galleries. She wanted *Italy for the Italians*, and she thought that when so many foreigners flooded Florence to see the old masterpieces, our servants should not be deprived of this privilege. The idea was a very good one in itself, for the sense of beauty and the artistic instinct of the Tuscan *popolani* is really remarkable, and deserves to be developed to its full.

Our Teresa enjoyed her excursions extremely. As a general thing she preferred going to churches and looking at the paintings of the saints. This she did quite

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independently of Mr. Ruskin's suggestion that religious art is the only true art. One morning, however, when my sister had allowed her to go on her artistic expedition, with the understanding that she should be home at noon and help the cook with the luncheon, Teresa did not turn up at all. Lunch was over, and still she did not appear. The time passed, it was late in the afternoon, and still no Teresa. Finally, about six o'clock, she arrived completely worn out.

This is the explanation of her delay: "Signorina," she said, "I have had the hardest day I have ever known. I did not go to a church this morning. If I had gone, I should not have had to pray so much. I went to the Specola, (the Florentine Museum of Natural History) and I thought I should never get through saying requiems."

"Requiems!" said my sister in amaze-

## TERESA AND THE CAT

ment. "Why should you say requiems at the Specola?"

"For the souls of those blessed dead, Signorina. I got into one room at ten o'clock, and I did not get through praying for each one until afternoon. Then I started on the second room, and I could not finish there because they put me out. But I counted the remaining skeletons and prayed for them in a church."

Teresa had been saying the prayers of the dead for every skeleton of an ape in the Natural History Museum at Florence. No doubt, some tourist going by made a note of it, and sometime the statement may appear in print that in Tuscany the *popolani* pray before the skeletons of monkeys.



**XI**  
**THE FOUNDLING**



## XI

### THE FOUNDLING

**A** YOUNG boy, a foundling, became a member of our household for a short sad while. My mother heard how he had been adopted by a Protestant couple in very humble circumstances when he was still a mere baby. They had kept him like their own child, and had sent him regularly to the Waldensian school, where he had been made much of as one of the most promising pupils. When he was twelve his foster-father died, and his foster-mother was too poor to provide for him. It was no unusual thing to have such cases referred to my mother, and she was seldom appealed to in vain.

She sent for the boy, little Poldo, and

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his foster-mother. He was a fragile, most refined-looking little fellow, with a white face, and appealing dark eyes. If it is true that race gives a visible stamp, the boy surely was of gentle blood. The foster-mother, who was a woman with plenty of common-sense and much natural dignity, told my mother that she did not wish for charity, but preferred to have the child put in a position to earn his own living as soon as possible. She explained that he had been offered an opportunity to go on with his studies, but she thought that support might fail him at any time, and that he would then be left helpless, discontented, and unfit for work. She and her husband belonged to the working-class, and she thought that the boy would be happiest if no attempt were made to take him out of his own sphere, though he showed remarkable success in his school work and passionate love for his books.

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My mother was not only very charitable, but also very enthusiastic, and somewhat romantic in her methods of charity. The whole thing touched her deeply, and she laid out a plan of her own from which she promised herself the greatest satisfaction. With the foster-mother's joyful consent she engaged the boy, at a small salary, as a servant at our house. His work was to be almost nominal. He was to clean the silver, and help the butler wait on the table. It was agreed that this would be a temporary arrangement which in his financial straits would preserve the lad's self-respect, since the boy's keep and something over was to be provided.

In her own mind my mother planned far beyond this, for she did not agree with the foster-mother as to the future of the child. She thought she would give him a short trial on the present plan, and if he proved himself deserving of all the praise

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that his teachers at the Waldensian school had given him, she would let him share lessons with my brother, who was just of the same age. His future after that could easily have been provided for, but before deciding anything she wanted a chance to study the child, and see whether it was advisable to lift him out of his present sphere.

My mother's plan was very wise in some ways. The child belonged, by position, absolutely to the lower classes, so that she could not expect him to feel humiliated by temporary association with our servants. She knew, of course, that absolute equality with my brother was a practical impossibility, and she thought that the little orphan would be far more contented if he came to the school-room after a few days of merely relative hardship. If she found out that it did not seem best to give him a higher education,

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she intended to place him in a manual training-school, where he might learn a good trade.

The boy was extremely bashful, and scarcely answered my mother's questions. He hung his head and blushed. When she asked him directly whether he was satisfied to come and help Gigi, the butler, he did not answer at all, and his foster-mother took it upon herself to answer affirmatively for him. But even if the child had had the courage to tell my mother that he did not want to come, she would scarcely have listened to him, since the arrangement was not to last. And besides, in matters of education, even the wishes of her own children had no weight. She thought, however, that the child might feel homesick, and bade his foster-mother come and see him frequently for the first days.

The woman and the boy went home,

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and only there did the child, in a tempest of grief, show his sorrow at having, as he thought, to give up all dreams of an education, and become a common servant. His foster-mother, though she loved him, did not understand him at all, and did not sympathize with him. She had been a lady's-maid herself before her marriage, and did not consider it a disgrace to be a servant.

The next day little Poldo entered upon his duties. The servants tried to be kind to him, but he was so bashful, and so silent, and showed so little appreciation of their advances that after having seen to it that he got plenty to eat, they left him to himself. It amused them very much because after dinner he got out his books and began to read and study. He evidently had the making of a student and a religious enthusiast. He had associated closely with one of the younger teachers

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in the Waldensian school, and was so precocious that he must have been very much of a companion to his elder friend. He undoubtedly had heard a good deal about the ignorance and the superstition of the Roman Catholics, and, poor little fellow, he felt altogether superior to our servants. After a few days he went so far as to try to convert them, and this slightly awoke their antagonism and separated him from them more and more.

My mother had told us about her plan, and we were wildly enthusiastic over it, for to have a foundling in the school-room seemed like a chapter out of a story-book. What did not suit us as well was the strict orders not to play with him, indeed, not to speak with him until we received my mother's permission, and that was not to be for full two weeks. My brother already looked upon Poldo as his exclusive property. We all thought of scarcely anything

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else, and our imagination soon took its usual long flights. We were quite sure that in time it would be discovered who his father and mother were. We generously made him the son of some prince or some duke, and while we did not desire any material reward, we felt what a triumph it would be when the whole world would know that we had taken care of him at a time when he scarcely had enough to eat.

Meanwhile the object of these plans and these discussions wandered about, an unhappy, lonely little figure, with nobody to speak to, feeling the loss of his older friend, the teacher, and of his companions in school, most bitterly. If I add that we had a beautiful garden, and that at play hours he could see us running by and hear us shouting in our play, while he was left all by himself to walk around the kitchen and in the vegetable garden, the pathos of the situation is made only too clear.

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## THE FOUNDLING

After a week the strain upon the boy began to show. His eyes had grown larger, and his little face had grown whiter and thinner. The servants who observed this tried to be kind to him, and to cheer him up. They even offered to listen to his religious instruction, but it was in vain. The little fellow would have nothing to do with them. He seemed so unbearably unhappy that they told my mother about it. She sent him at once to spend Sunday with his teacher at the Waldensian school.

He came back a little brighter, but this brightness soon passed away, and when they told my mother that he could be heard sobbing half the night, she decided that in the shortest time in which suitable clothes could be provided, she would take him out of the servants' quarters, and let him start work with my brother. It was for the child's own sake that she did not wish him to wear his livery. She felt that



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he was unfitted to be a servant, and she wished him to get his chance to show himself worthy of an education before she put him in the manual training-school.

My mother then sent for Poldo's foster-mother to talk the matter over with her, and here she met with unexpected resistance. She finally almost overcame the woman's objections that the boy would be made unhappy if he were raised out of her own station in life and that he would in time learn to look down upon her. This, of course, was not quite unjustified, for the child showed a decided tendency, even with the servants, to consider himself better than the rest. My mother felt sure that she could convince the woman to let Poldo have his chance with us, but since the latter's objection was so strong she also thought it best not to speak with the boy until she had his foster-mother's full consent.

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Meanwhile Poldo was wretched. He evidently was a morbid, excitable child whom circumstances had made abnormally sensitive. The very evening when my mother had given orders for his new clothes and had talked the matter over with his foster-mother, a curious discussion arose in the kitchen which brought the pitiful episode to a tragic end. They got to speaking of thefts, and old Gigi, the butler, boasted of how nothing would ever induce my father and mother to doubt his honesty.

This was practically true, and old Gigi had tested their faith in him. A few years before burglars had broken into the house in order to steal our silver. They were as unprofessional as the burglars who broke into my great-grandfather's villa. They left the solid silver, which was only marked, but otherwise perfectly plain, and took the plated silver, *cristofle*,

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as we called it, which was far more elaborate in design. When the police came to investigate, Gigi was closely questioned.

"Did you hear anything during the night?" asked the police inspector.

"Yes," was the respectful but guarded answer.

"What did you hear?"

"I heard as though somebody were opening and closing drawers."

"What did you think it was?"

"I thought it was the cat."

Nor could Gigi be brought to make any statement beyond this. What saved him was my father's absolute confidence and the fact that he knew the difference between the solid silver and the *cristofle* too well to admit that he could have had any hand in the theft. His explanation of his answer was characteristic: "I did not wish to compromise myself." He thought that

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throwing the responsibility on the cat was the safest way.

By the way, our burglars seem to have been endowed with unusual sentiment, for when these particular ones were caught and questioned as to why they took the *crisofle* and left the solid silver, they said: "Those other knives and forks looked so plain, we did not think they were any good, and the *Signor Generale* had always been so kind to us that we wished to leave him something with which to eat his breakfast."

But to come back to my story. The discussion as to what would happen in case anything of value was stolen became general, and finally one of the men, merely to tease Poldo and without any malignant intention, told the boy: "Well, if anything is stolen the blame will fall on you."

"But why?" asked the little fellow.

"Because you always are poring over

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books, and that teaches people a lot of wicked things. It is not good for any one. Really good servants do not even know how to read and write. All this knowledge makes anarchists and thieves."

Then the little fellow became excited and the others egged him on in mere fun.

The next morning Poldo's little bed was untouched and empty. My mother sent at once to the home of his foster-mother, but he had not been seen. He had not gone to the Waldensian school either, and when the police were notified they could find no trace of him.

Several days later the waves of the Mediterranean washed his little body to the shore. In his pocket was found a letter addressed to his friend and teacher, in which he said how he could bear it no longer, because as he saw us playing around in the garden and passed the school-room and saw us at work, he real-

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ized what a child's life might be. And he added: "Now if anything is stolen, I will be taken for the thief merely because I love my books and they think that servants should not even know how to read and write."



**XII**  
**MAMA'S RAVENS**





## XII

### MAMA'S RAVENS

**M**Y grandfather was consul-general at Leghorn for many years, and even long after his death it remained the custom that any stray German in any kind of need should be directed to us for relief. Sometimes these Germans would come with recommendations from the consulate, or from the German Protestant clergyman, but many times they simply got casual directions from some native who knew that they would be kindly received at our house. And often some German wandering apprentice would come to us for a square meal. My mother always saw them personally and with real pleasure, for it

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brought her back to the days of her childhood. We children felt rather antagonistic toward the German element as a whole, and this because, as I have said, we were not always on the best footing with our German instructors. We found out that, as a rule, my mother's kindness received but poor appreciation, and that the people who had been cared for were never heard from afterward. We, therefore, revengefully called these protégés "Mama's Ravens." This shows that we were not always good, and that we had been drilled in Bible history.

The greater number of the Ravens were German governesses, whose pathetic experiences would fill a volume.

Once, for instance, in the time of the Grand Duke, my mother received a letter from a young German woman, who claimed that she was held a prisoner in a Jewish family. The letter was smuggled

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out of the house by the water-carrier, who took pity on the young girl.

My mother went immediately to investigate the case. The Jews refused her admittance, and indeed, any kind of information. My mother, as I think my readers have already found out, was a woman of quick action. She considered that to treat the matter in an official way through the German Consulate would mean a long delay, so she went direct to the Grand Duke, and asked him for two *carabinieri*, who might assist her in her mission. The Grand Duke granted her request over the heads of all military authorities.

Imagine the dramatic effect produced by my mother, a small, slender, stylish young woman, as she again presented herself, flanked by two *carabinieri*, and demanded the immediate release of the young German. The Jews yielded at once.

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Yet even this girl proved a typical Raven, for, after she had been rescued from a position which was not only trying, but dangerous—after she had been kept as a guest at my mother's home until she found suitable employment—she was never heard from again.

The fact that there was no restriction on our intercourse with these Ravens when my mother took them in to roost, gave us an intimate acquaintance with their character and habits. We grew to know them very much better than our Italian servants, with whom intercourse was very much restricted.

In my time, when I was about fourteen, my mother heard of a German governess who had come to Leghorn to take a position in a Jewish family. Upon her arrival she found that she would have to sleep in a room with seven Jewish youngsters, and that, moreover, the most menial work was

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expected of her. She fled in dismay. She was penniless and spoke no word of Italian, and but little French. The German clergyman reported the case to my mother, who at once asked the woman to come and stay with us till she was provided for. This is how Fraeulein von Fetzen joined our household.

Fraeulein von Fetzen was at least forty; she was tall and angular; she had a mass of false hair on the back of her head, and her front hair was dyed. We children discovered this as soon as hot weather set in, for—the dye would run.

In her own eyes, the most important thing about her was the little particle *von*, which put her in the ranks of the nobility and, according to her, established the privilege of meeting us children on equal grounds.

This Raven took much trouble to claim a privilege which nobody disputed, for we

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poor youngsters met our governesses on a footing in which the superiority was all on their side. Social distinctions were not even discussed in the school-room. We were treated with great simplicity, and always called by our first names.

It was a great delight to us, therefore, when Fraulein von Fetzen began to give us our full name with the addition of the particle *von*, which is not Italian. What we quixotically objected to, however, was the contemptuous way in which she addressed our governess, Fraulein Schmidt, a pretty creature who had won our hearts, simply because she had no claim to the particle *von*.

Fraulein von Fetzen had another weakness which amused us beyond words. She thought herself young and beautiful. Now, forty is not a decrepit age in itself, but it does seem terribly advanced to

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youngsters in their early teens. Moreover, she was absolutely homely.

Not less characteristic was her conviction that her charms were dangerous. She confided to Fraeulein Schmidt that she did not like to have too much to do with my brother Alick, who was *already* sixteen, because she thought it might disturb his peace of mind. And this absurd woman could not see that Fraeulein Schmidt, who, as I have said, was as pretty as a picture, quite unwillingly had herself disturbed my brother's peace of mind, and that, though she did not confide this to Fraeulein von Fetzen, she and all of us were well aware of the fact. Since Fraeulein Schmidt had no *von* to her name, Fraeulein von Fetzen thought that she was a negligible quantity, and she made this emphatically clear on all occasions.

Luncheon was a merry meal for us in



## *A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD*

those days, because my father and mother were never present, and we could speak as much as we liked without asking permission to do so. Moreover, at dinner in my father's presence we spoke Italian, and this debarred Fraeulein von Fetzen from any share in the conversation, while at lunch she could make up for lost time, keeping us in roars of laughter. Fraeulein Schmidt was not a disciplinarian, and this gave us a chance to breathe and be happy.

One day I asked Fraeulein Schmidt: "Fraeulein, why have you never married?"

"Because nobody has ever wanted me," she answered with a merry laugh.

I was mischievously conscious that Fraeulein von Fetzen expected to receive the same question next, but I would not ask it. She, however, volunteered the information: "I cannot say that I am in the

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same position. Seven men asked me in one year."

We raised a howl of protest.

"Fraulein von Fetzen, you relentlessly sacrificed the happiness of seven men?"

"Do you ever expect to go to Heaven?"

"Were none of them noble enough for you?"

After this I got into the bad habit of discussing love and marriage with Fraulein von Fetzen. My mother, of course, was utterly unsuspecting of the pernicious influence her beloved Raven was having on her second daughter. Fraulein von Fetzen told me in detail about her seven admirers, none of whom she considered sufficiently noble to be worthy of her hand. I, who had no personal experiences, would in turn tell her wonderful stories about personages that existed only in my imagination, but that interested Fraulein von Fetzen tremendously, be-

## *A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD*

cause I gave them high-sounding names and titles.

Fraeulein von Fetzen was also very curious, and questioned me closely as to family connections and family affairs. This led me into temptation.

We had a very beautiful marble bust of an uncle of mine who had died young. Fraeulein von Fetzen showed more than usual inquisitiveness in asking me all about him. I cannot explain to this day what possessed me to make up a long and connected story, in which there was no word of truth, though I fully understand how Fraeulein von Fetzen's breathless interest led me to indefinitely continue and elaborate it.

I told her: "Fraeulein, that is my favorite uncle. We say he is dead, but he is not. It is one of those family tragedies which, as you say, every real noble family must have. If you swear to me on your

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## MAMA'S RAVENS

honor as a true member of the German nobility, that you will never breathe a syllable to any one of what you hear, I will tell you all about it."

Fraulein took her oath.

Then I continued: "You see this uncle of mine used to live in Corsica. He was engaged to a most beautiful young girl, the daughter of a duke. [By the way, Corsica has no dukes.] One day, after having been out hunting, he went to the castle of his fiancée. As he arrived she was standing on the broad stairs of white marble. He came up and in fun pointed his rifle at her, saying: 'I am going to kill you.' The rifle was loaded, though my uncle did not know it, and a ball went straight through the heart of the beautiful girl, who fell dead on the white marble steps, staining them red with her blood. Fraulein, it upsets me too much to give you the details of the tragedy, and I shall

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simply tell you that my uncle was broken-hearted, and that he became a monk in a Certosa convent, where they never see any one, where they are under a vow of absolute silence, and where they count as dead."

Then I continued describing graphically how these monks are never allowed to speak except when they pass each other and say in a low muffled tone: "Brother, we must die." Fraeulein von Fetzen was a Roman Catholic, and this part of my narrative appealed to her particularly on that account.

I had impressed it upon Fraeulein that if it were discovered that she knew our family secret, they might "try to get her out of the way." Fraeulein had very romantic, unsound views about Italy, and I took undue advantage of this.

My uncle, the Certosa monk, became our favorite subject of conversation, and

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Fraulein von Fetzen continued to be an eager, interested listener. My stories were beginning to give out when a luminous idea came to me. I began to write a series of love letters, which I claimed had been exchanged between my uncle and his fiancée, and which I got from the family archives. As my father was not the head of the family, this was a "whopper" worthy of my brother Alick. We had no family archives.

I knew that my story and my letters would meet with general disapproval, and that there was nobody in the family, from my mother to my youngest brother, who would countenance this sort of thing, or see anything excusable in my performance; so I kept my own counsel, enjoyed my fun all by myself, and continued to elaborate the correspondence between Riconovaldo, the fictitious name for my uncle, and Rosmonda, his sweetheart.

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But I was not to enjoy this long. My brother Alick came across a few of the letters addressed to Riconovaldo. He was shocked and horrified. Of course, without explanation it was pretty hard to understand what they actually stood for. His conscience compelled him to bring the matter before my mother, and my mother, after hearing all about it—gave me the last actual whipping I ever had.

Fraeulein von Fetzen was one of the very worst specimens of "Mama's Ravens." She was ignorant, and her ignorance was only equaled by her conceit. She was inquisitive and indiscreet. With all her false pride, she was an outrageous beggar, and always wheedling trifles from us children and from our governess.

It is characteristic of our whole system of education that we should be so unguardedly intrusted to the hands of foreigners, simply because they were for-

## MAMA'S RAVENS

eigners, while such care was taken when we came into contact with natives. I feel strongly on the subject, because even to-day it affects the education of so many children of the higher classes in Italy.

While in our relations with our Italian dependents the best side of our character was appealed to and brought out, (I could quote numerous instances of childish unselfishness and generosity which my brothers and sisters showed) these "Ravens" often led us to do things which were far from commendable, and for which they were actually more responsible than were we.

Fraulein von Fetzen had a mania for relics. She found out that Fraulein Schmidt had been in Spain, and that her former pupils had given her several very beautiful silver medals of Saints. Since Fraulein Schmidt, like ourselves, was Protestant, Fraulein von Fetzen thought



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that the relics should be hers by right, and she kept asking for them. Moreover, her request was made with irritating condescension, for, as I have said, she did not consider Fraeulein Schmidt her equal.

She also teased us to find out whether we had any relics in the family that we could spare, for, she argued that since we were Protestants, we had no use for them, and she might just as well get the benefit of them.

She finally suggested to me whether I could not find some relics for her in the famous archives. When I told Fraeulein Schmidt and the children about this, Fraeulein Schmidt, who had altogether too much fun in her to be a model governess, said: "Why don't you make a relic for her yourself? Surely that would n't be too hard."

My sister took the idea up enthusiastically, and between us we made a relic

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which might have deceived a more intelligent person than Fraeulein von Fetzen. We took a piece of parchment from the cover of some old book; we made extra stains on it with rust and lemon-juice; then we made up a long sentence in which the words were taken from Italian, Spanish, Latin and French, and were jumbled together in such a way that if they ever fall into the hands of some Romance philologist, he will be sorely puzzled. In this jargon we said approximately: "Fraeulein von Fetzen, with her *von*, is a goose. She has shamefully begged for a relic and now she gets it. May it do her the good she deserves."

Then we took some of my hair, singed it, and sealed it on with sealing-wax which we impressed with a seal we had most ingeniously made for the purpose out of hardened clay.

As soon as we had finished, we brought

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the relic triumphantly to Fraeulein von Fetzen, telling her that we had got it out of the family archives at the risk of our lives almost, for it had been in the family a thousand years; we recognized that since we were Protestants, the relic would be best in the hands of such a true member of the nobility as herself, and we intrusted it to her, if she were willing to fulfil the necessary conditions.

The most important of these conditions was, that for the first three weeks she had this relic she should recite her beads before it at least three times a day. If she did not, the greatest calamity would fall upon her house, for it was on these conditions only that the relic could ever change hands, even in the same family.

We also told her that the relic itself consisted of a lock of hair of Saint Lawrence, which had been taken from him when he was being roasted on the grid-

## MAMA'S RAVENS

iron, just before he asked to be turned over, because one side was done, and that the singeing proved the authenticity of the relic.

Fraulein von Fetzen accepted our present with the greatest glee. Her conscience was not in the least disturbed by the fact that, according to our statement, the relic had been taken from the family archives without my parents' knowledge and consent.

My mother found out about all this much later, and was very indignant. I myself by no means relate it as a joke. We were very young, and this constitutes our main excuse. It would have been better for us to have grown up with a superstitious belief in relics than to have mocked the faith of others, no matter what their weakness might be. I may add here that in time a reaction against this very levity, shown by our foreign instructors on

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religious subjects, set in, and that it almost led us back to the church of our fathers.

Fraulein von Fetzen left us after having stayed with us many weeks. Like a true raven, she flew away and never was heard from again.

**XIII**  
**MY POPOLO**



## XIII

### MY POPOLO

**E**XCEPT in summer at the Baths, we had very little to do with other children. When we went out walking we were expected not to stop and converse with any one. Other children occasionally called upon us with their parents, and we would accompany our father and mother when the call was returned. These children scarcely entered into our life. Some of them I have met, as far back as I can remember, about once a year. We called one another by our first names, and said "thou," but the intercourse between us was a formal one and ended there.

It was not until I was thirteen that I made the acquaintance of a family of children who became my intimate friends.



## *A TUSCAN CHILDHOOD*

The friendship established between us has never been disturbed nor diminished. My governess knew their governess, and it was thus that we first met. There were five girls and one boy, the oldest girl being of my own age.

They were charming children, and even under ordinary circumstances I should have enjoyed being with them, but it so happened that they took a great fancy to me, and it soon grew to a boundless admiration. They invested me with unlimited authority. Whatever I said was law.

I have stated that I came in the middle of my own family, and consequently did not count for much. To find myself looked up to, flattered, blindly obeyed, was a most delicious experience, and, I may add, one which did me an infinite amount of good. No doubt the children of Poggiopiano (Poggiopiano was their

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country-place) exaggerated my good qualities, but I am sure that they drew out the best in me, and that I showed to them sides of my nature which nobody else has known.

Their devotion to me was a source of amusement to all the grown-ups in both families, and this is not surprising. After my first visit to their house, they tied a little white ribbon to the chair I had sat upon, and this chair was used by the children in turns, and under no consideration was any one else allowed to sit upon it. This alone would have been enough to make grown-up people smile. My father nicknamed them my *Popolo*, thus graphically summing up the relation between a ruler and a beloved people.

To my surprise and delight their mother finally persuaded mine to let me visit at Poggiopiano. I had never been allowed to visit my own relatives even. Indeed,

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that very summer an invitation to visit some cousins had been refused, my mother saying that she would never let us go anywhere without her. The unexpectedness of my mother's consent made my delight all the greater.

Poggiopiano proved to be an earthly paradise to me. My being a few months older than Giulia, the oldest of the children, put me, in age at least, at the head. Besides, to be granted absolute power, to have every whim obeyed, was really intoxicating. I admit that the greatest charm of my visit at Poggiopiano lay in this undisputed sovereignty, which, however, did not exclude a most devoted love for my subjects, my Popolo.

But there were other attractions—long walks which we took to the different peasant houses, the permission to do anything we liked and go anywhere we liked in the whole house. At my home we had to stay

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in our own quarters. Indeed, my mother did not allow us even to stay in our bedroom unless we had something definite to do that could only be done there. But at Poggiopiano we could go into the cellars and watch the men fill the barrels with wine, or we could go up to the garret, crack nuts, and eat all we wanted.

It would be impossible to enumerate all the attractions of Poggiopiano, but one of these, which appealed to me particularly, was the haunted chapel. They had a pretty chapel that was in disuse then, and which popular tradition said was haunted by an old priest.

Of course, we did boast of one or two ghosts of our own at the villa at Leghorn, but they were all rationally explained away, and we were not expected to believe in them. The children of Poggiopiano, however, were really afraid of their ghost, and thus endowed it with a charm of real-

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ity that my own slighted home ghosts lacked.

The chapel was built next to the villa, so that the façades of both stood in line, and the two buildings were connected internally by long, narrow corridors. An old priest had owned the place many years ago, and it was his ghost that haunted the chapel. A long room, formerly the vestry, had been turned into a nursery. A small room next to it was used as a dressing-room, and had a door that opened into the dark corridor which led to the wooden choir of the chapel.

To make a slight digression here: we have in my family a reputation for bravery. I think that we live up to it naturally and without effort, but I also think that for the sake of living up to this reputation we have often done things in sheer bravado that we otherwise would have left undone.

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To use an expressive American colloquialism, we never took a dare.

As soon as I found out that there was a ghost at Poggiopiano, and that the little ones were afraid of it, it became me to show that, as a true Cipriani, I did not know the meaning of fear. In order to show off my hereditary courage, I threatened at once to throw open the door of the dressing-room and walk into the chapel. This was fun in itself, for Luisina cried, Baby and Paola caught hold of my feet and held me fast, and I felt very brave over it all.

But the haunted chapel had a genuine attraction for me. Some time passed. We had enjoyed talking ourselves into the belief that there was a ghost around, separated from the nursery only by the long dark corridor that led to the upper choir. The children of Poggiopiano en-

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joyed talking about the ghost far better than having any immediate personal relation with it. But that was not the case with me. I was anxious to see whether there was a ghost, and anxious to show my superior courage in not being afraid to see it.

Providence helped me, for I was allowed to spend Christmas and the New Year at Poggiopiano. It was then that I made the rash boast that on New Year's eve at midnight I should go all alone to the haunted chapel. The details of the enterprise I planned with some ingenuity. On New Year's eve they sent us children to bed about eleven, two hours later than usual. We did go to bed, since we were told to do so, but we were not told not to get up again, and so we compromised with our consciences and managed to undress, to lie down in bed, and to dress again before midnight. It was I who insisted upon

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the details, telling the children I should never allow them to disobey.

Our elders were laughing and talking down-stairs, and it was merely a dramatic instinct that made us glide around barefooted and on tiptoe, and whisper cautiously. The children were all a little scared. They were not, like myself, endowed with a far-known, hereditary courage, nor had they been brought up with a fine and consistent scorn of the supernatural.

We tiptoed carefully through the nursery, and closed the door of the little ones' dressing-room. Then we lighted the candles we had brought with us, and opened the door that led into the dark corridor. As midnight struck, I walked in all alone.

My heart was beating a little; my candle blinded me, though I tried to shield it with my hand; besides, the door open at one end caused a draft, and the unsteady,



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rambling flame conjured up curious shadows all around me, weird, moving circles that made me afraid to step on the floor. The cobwebs caught in my hair and in my eyelashes, and I could not brush them away, for I was using both hands to hold and shield the candle from the draft that might otherwise have put it out. My bare feet were chilled by the damp cold of the stone pavement, and I regretted having insisted that shoes and stockings were not permissible on a midnight ghost chase. Perfect silence fell around me, and even the sound of my own steps would have seemed a comfort. I wanted to turn around and see if the children were still in the dressing-room, but I was ashamed to do so. Finally I reached the choir.

“Now, I can go back,” I thought, giving a sigh of relief, but my conscience compelled me to walk to the very middle of the chapel.

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Then I knocked my foot against one of the benches, and bending down quickly to touch the bruised spot, I dropped my candle, which left me in the dark.

Suddenly a winged monster flew against me and almost knocked me over. I tried to call, but my voice failed me. Unconsciously I put out my hand for the candle, and found it on the bench before me. I grasped it, though it was of no use. Then I turned and tremblingly groped my way back.

Soon I felt the stone pavement under my feet, and knew that I was in the corridor. I took a long breath and felt safe. Then I heard the fluttering of the wings again, and a weird, hooting sound echoing through the vaulted ceiling of the chapel.

I tried to run, but my knees were so weak that in spite of myself my retreat remained dignified. Finally, to my inexpressible relief, I saw that the door which

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opened into the dressing-room had been left ajar, and that in the shaft of light I could see the children's faces. Slowly, painfully, for my foot was badly bruised, I reached safety.

"Quick, quick, or we shall all be caught," said Giulia. "They are coming up now."

"How pale you look," said Daria.

"I have hurt my foot," I said, "but it does not amount to much."

"You are awfully brave for a girl," said Pietro. "Why the girls here waiting for you were more afraid than you were."

I did not answer, but quickly withdrew to my room.

The next morning the children, who belonged to the happy tribe of the unscolded, told their mother all about it before I went down to breakfast. When I came down my sense of honor compelled me to confess that there was a ghost, and that I had

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been much frightened. My faithful Popolo were readier to believe in the ghost than in my fear.

Their mother undertook to investigate the chapel with us in broad daylight. We all went in together, and found that I had walked into the nest of a big white owl.

My exploits as a ghost-hunter only served to confirm the children's belief that nobody could be braver than I was. They exaggerated and even attributed to me qualities that I did not have. Yet their confidence in me was deserved, for I took my position as *Capopopolo* (Englished: "Leader of the People") very seriously, and tried to live up conscientiously to all that the children believed me to be.

This conscientiousness is now most amusing for us to look back upon. Giulia, the oldest of my Popolo, claims that nowadays little girls never are as serious as she and I were. I do not know if this is

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true, but I do think that we showed exceptional earnestness and eagerness in doing what was best, without being held to it by their mother, who was most lenient.

I provided reading matter for them. At my home we had a great number of children's books in various languages. Moreover, I made a careful choice among the novels which I thought it advisable to let them read. In the case of novels that I thought entertaining, but not altogether suitable, I would read selections to them aloud, but would not allow them to get hold of the book.

One of the books which they got to know in this fashion was Ouida's "Under Two Flags." When the omissions I had made were hard to explain, I would simply improvise. Young though I was I did not approve of Ouida for children.

The children remembered "Under Two

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Flags" for a long time, and Giulia tells me that she only got hold of an unexpurgated version of it after she was married. The same I did with some of the French books I had been allowed to read myself, as "Le Morne au Diable" by Sue, which contains some most exciting passages. I may say that my methods of expurgation consisted, to a great extent, in cutting out anything pertaining to love-making. I had been surfeited with love-sick literature myself, and I thought that novels might turn children's heads and were not good for them.

The willingness with which the children allowed me to keep the books from them, and read only what I thought best, illustrates our relations.

The influence for good that I tried to exert on my Popolo did not end here. I insisted upon improving amusements, and I insisted upon maintaining control of the

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play hours even when I was not with them.

One of my ideas was to spend the mornings in vacation writing stories. We would take a volume of the Tauchnitz Edition, copy a list of titles from the back, writing each title on a separate folded paper, and shake them up together in a basket. Then we would draw, each of us three titles. On one of these titles we had to write a story. This for English days; that is, when I allowed them to write in English. My Popolo had once had English governesses, though they, too, had lately been turned over to Germans, and we usually talked, and always wrote, to each other in English. If, however, a story had to be written in Italian, then we ourselves originated the titles. It was only later that we wrote stories even in German and French. French particularly was a language my Popolo did not enjoy.

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When I was away from them I insisted that this amusement—it was an amusement for me—should be kept up. We got copy-books, and by turns wrote compositions in them, first English, then Italian, then French, then German. We each wrote one story a month. I have one of these copy-books before me now, and I wish I might quote from it. If children in America could use the languages they study (but do not learn) with such ease, they would derive much pleasure and much profit from it.

Even the children of Poggiopiano preferred English to French or German. They spoke it with ease, though not quite as correctly as we did, because they had not had an English governess for some time, they did not have as many books as we did, and their mother did not speak English. But this very year Daria won a prize for a composition sent to “Little



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Folks" in England, and Paola wrote a jingle which illustrates the facility with which the Italian people assimilate a foreign tongue. The jingle runs:

"With much pleasure and satisfaction,  
I'm the daughter of Mrs. Jackson.  
If you love me,  
Put your head above me,  
For with pleasure and satisfaction,  
I'm the daughter of Mrs. Jackson.

\* \* \* \*

Call me Margaret, call me Jenny,  
Still for that I care no penny,  
For with pleasure and satisfaction,  
I'm the daughter of Mrs. Jackson."

Little Paola, who was then not more than nine, merely did what the Italian minor poets of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries have done before her, she made a foreign tongue completely her own.

The days I spent at Poggiopiano are among the calmest and happiest of my life. I go back there often, and for me the place has never lost its charm.

**XIV**  
**OTHER PLAYMATES**



## XIV

### OTHER PLAYMATES

**W**E had other playmates, but, with one exception, none as dear and near as the children of Poggiopiano.

The one exception was a Piedmontese child, a little older than myself, who was my particular friend. Her father was an officer in the army, and our friendship began one winter at Pisa, when her father was stationed there. My childish recollections of her are closely associated with flowers, and with white cats. Indeed, it was she who gave us the white cat that got Alick into trouble. Her mother was passionately fond of flowers, and Fede's house was always full of them.

What also made a vivid impression on

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me was that Fede's mother was a very pretty woman, an English woman with golden hair, who was wont to wear a close-fitting dark green riding-habit. She filled my expectations as to what a woman on horseback ought to look like—in and out of books. In my mind I contrasted her tailor-made appearance with the flowing veils and the tumbled locks of the heroines in the *Gartenlaube*. Needless to say that I preferred the English to what I considered the German style.

We were living in a rented apartment in town that season, not in our own villa at the Piagge. Fede was allowed to go out walking with me, and on our walks we would invariably go to the villa and pick flowers. We would come back with our arms full of tea-roses, for which Fede's mother always gladly found a place. But sometimes we would wait for her to pass the villa on horseback, and then it was our

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greatest delight to bombard her with blossoms as she went by. Do you wonder that she is associated with flowers in my mind?

We had other playmates who were interesting, but of whom I never grew fond. They belonged to the same period, that same winter at Pisa which stands out for me more than any other, because I was quite an important person in the house. Baby and Lucy had died, Matthew was at the naval academy, Totty was at school in Germany, and only Alick, myself and Ritchie were left at home.

My mother invited three English children to share our lessons.

They were naughty, very naughty children. Now we were naughty ourselves occasionally, but it was not premeditated naughtiness. We did not consciously and purposely plan to do what was wrong.

I think that I really had an unlimited

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capacity for mischief, though it generally was not allowed to come out. On two occasions when I was with these English children I realized that under proper circumstances I could not only have equaled them, but excelled them, in mischief.

We had an Italian teacher at this time who would give us the most unheard-of subjects for compositions. One day she assigned us an essay with the title "Methods in Education," and whose outline, which we were expected to elaborate, ran as follows:

"A mother goes out walking with her little daughter, and the child notices that the country road is all covered with diminutive frogs. 'Mama,' says the child, 'did the frogs rain from Heaven?' Elaborate the answer of the mother, making her explain with sternness, reproving the child, or making her explain with kindness and condescension, that the frogs did not rain

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from Heaven, but had come out of the ditches on account of the recent rain."

The six of us had to write this composition—the oldest was not yet twelve, and the youngest was eight.

It was I who suggested elaborating the mother's method by making her use the strongest language we knew of in some essay, and the most gushing, sentimental language in the other. Now, any normal Tuscan child, consciously or unconsciously knows an absolutely appalling number of *cuss* words, for the Tuscan people rank as the most voluble and elaborate swearers in the world. You will hear your cabman swearing at his horse, your gardener swearing at a cabbage, a passer-by swearing at the weather, the government, or even nothing at all, and always with an infinite variety of words. You soon learn the system. First of all you can take a number of saints' names, and vary your



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swearing by connecting them with the names of different animals, principally a pig and a dog, or you can elaborate your list by bringing in relatives, each name of a relative being accompanied with a curse. Besides, there is a fleeting fashion in swearing, which brings wondrous expressions upon the Tuscans' lips. One of these that raged the winter our essay was written was: "God in Heaven with no clothes on and his hands in his pockets." You see that when you resort to this kind of thing, variety becomes infinite.

Now, we were strictly forbidden to use any words that were not correct, but they could not prevent our hearing them.

I told Alick my plan, and he, being older, and having more to do with the men, knew, of course, twenty times as many bad words as I did. We duly elaborated the mother's speech, and after having described the mother, the child, and the walk

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they took, having stated that they saw a number of frogs, we let the child ask the question: "Did the frogs rain from Heaven?" Then the mother answered with a full page of consecutive swear words. This we remarked was a stern way of bringing up children.

This style of essay was adopted only by us older children. Ritchie, and Ethel, the youngest of our English friends, had to pay the price of youth, and were not allowed to use one single bad word. We compelled them to make an elaborate list of such terms as little darling, dearest love, blessed love, golden heart, adored angel; in fact, anything we could glean from German and Italian combined.

The result need hardly be mentioned. We wicked ones were summarily dealt with. Alick and I could not walk straight for a couple of days. But Ethel and Ritchie, who had cried when we had not

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allowed them to use bad words, were taken out driving, and to the open-air theater to see *Pulcinella*. And the wretched little things never thanked us.

Our sentimental Fraeulein Helene was with us at this time, and her love affairs were progressing finely, especially on Tuesdays, for on Tuesdays my mother used to go to Leghorn to see her relatives, and we had dancing-lessons. Then Fraeulein Helene would converse with her lover, and the dancing-master would be left at our mercy.

He was a funny, nervous little man, who had no idea of discipline, and who would fly into a temper at any mistake we made. The English children, of course, shared these lessons with us, and their naughtiness knew no bounds. They went farther than we ever dared to go.

They would close the shutters of the

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large parlor in which we danced, and when they had thus obtained sufficient darkness, they would put half-spent matches in their mouths. The light would show through their teeth, and, dancing around, they pretended to be little devils risen from the lower regions.

Meanwhile, the mutually absorbed Fraulein and the tutor left us to our own devices.

There is a limit to everything, however, and one day the limit was reached. The dancing-master declared that under no circumstances would he ever come to teach us again. He was dancing-master at the Royal Institute of Sant-Anna. He was no common low-born person, and we might just as well know it. He taught, and had always taught in all the aristocratic families at Pisa, and never had he seen children behave as we did. (I thor-

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oughly believe this!) He would tell our mother about it, and he would never, never teach us again.

The three English children did not care. Their punishment never amounted to anything. But we knew that it would go hard with us if any account of our misdemeanors reached our parents. I was the spokesman.

"Professor," I said, "you surely would not tell our father and mother about this. You like children to be gay."

"No," he replied, "I do not like children to be gay when they behave as you do. I think it is a disgrace. I am going away and shall never teach you again."

Then we pleaded, but our pleading was in vain. We had gone just a little too far. We could not soften him. The other children stood around dejected and frightened. I had a streak of real impudence in my make-up, and I argued just a little too

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long. The dancing-master grew seriously angry at me. He pulled out his pocket-book, and producing a card on which his name was printed with many flourishes, this card he handed to me.

He shouted to me dramatically: "See who I am. See if I am the kind of a person with whom you could allow yourself such naughtiness."

My readers must allow me an absolutely necessary digression. Dueling was not, and is not to-day, uncommon in Italy. I have stated that my family had a reputation for bravery. This reputation involved stories of numerous duels wrongly attributed to my father and my uncle, and of which rumors had reached the schoolroom. Even the little story in which "*Danke sehr*," was misunderstood for "*Donkey, Sir*," and led to an encounter on the field of honor, shows how early we were familiar with the idea of dueling. In fact,

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we knew more than children generally do about it. We should, for instance, never have said that a party to a duel won or lost, a common mistake even for Italians. Now, we had an old French humorous magazine, in which the following illustrated joke, which my father had explained to me, was to be found: The sketch represented a theater, and two men, who had risen from their seats, were evidently having an argument. Each held a card in his hand. Below this was written:

"Monsieur, this is my card."

"Monsieur, this is mine."

These gentlemen had exchanged the cards of their tailors.

My father had explained this joke to me, and that is how, though so young, I understood that gentlemen before fighting a duel exchange cards, and then send each other their seconds. To return to my story:

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When the dancing-master handed me his card, I accepted it, and replied with great dignity: "Sir, I have no card to return, but you know my name. I cannot fight, but you will find my father always ready to fight a duel for me. We shall send you our seconds."

This took the poor little man's breath away. I suppose that the mere thought of fighting a duel froze the blood in his veins, not to mention fighting a duel with my father.

Tremblingly he answered: "Why, what do you mean? I don't want to fight a duel."

I noticed quickly enough that he was frightened, and I took an impish advantage of the situation. "If you did not want to fight a duel, why did you insult me by offering me your card? Gentlemen only give their cards when they want to fight. Papa says so. (Which was decidedly stretching my father's statement.)



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Papa will be glad to fight you. He is n't afraid. He does n't care about one duel more or less. *He likes it!*" Which was doubly absurd, as my father's last duel had been fought long before I was born.

But the dancing-master did not realize this. He first protested, then apologized, and finally abjectly begged for mercy: "Signorina Lisi, you know that I did not mean to insult you. You would not cause the death of a poor man? In all my life I have never held a sword in my hand."

Then Alick put in a word: "Papa would not mind fighting with pistols. All you 've got to do now is to find seconds."

The man actually trembled. He did not know my father personally at all, and he did not realize that he was too courteous and too gentle to allow our taking advantage of any one's timidity in this way. I wonder sometimes if Papa, who has, as I have said, little sense of humor,

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would have seen anything funny in the terror of the poor little dancing-master because he had involuntarily challenged me to a duel.

Finally we compromised. "The Professor of Dancing at the Royal Institute of Sant-Anna" did not tell how naughty we had been; we promised to behave better, and kept our promise; and we did not tell our father to fight a duel for me.

Meanwhile, Fraeulein and the tutor were blissfully progressing in their love affairs.



**XV**  
**THE END**



## XV

### THE END

**F**ATE has taken me away from my own country, and has robbed me of all that seemed rightfully mine by inheritance, but nothing can rob me of the reminiscences of my childhood, and nothing in life is dearer to me.

I find others who scarcely remember back of their ninth and tenth years. Life for them begins then. With me it is different. The sorrows and joys that have come since have not influenced my life as deeply as those of my childhood and my girlhood.

It was not all happiness. Death came. First Baby and Lucy died, the poor little victims of diphtheria. Next we lost Alick,

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the greatest sorrow I have known. The loss of our fortune brought with it anxiety and trouble for all, and finally led, when I was a mere girl, to the breaking-up of the family and voluntary exile for two of us.

We might have been happier if we had been brought up a little less strictly, if our personal inclinations, our personal desires had not always been pitilessly sacrificed to what was considered for the best intellectually. But these trials were not without great compensation.

We were not prepared for happiness, but we were prepared to go through life with courage, self-control, an uncompromising sense of honor and justice, and, I think I may claim, unselfishness. We learned that duties in life always outweigh privileges, and that personal satisfaction is of small account. Last but not least, we learned how to work and how to

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## *THE END*

study. Our instructors, by stern rule and individual care, did for us what the American public school teachers in the crowded class-room can never do, and this has stood us in good stead.

Nor would I have any one think that I judge our foreign teachers too harshly. The mistakes they made were often unavoidable. They generally were young. They always were strangers in the country, and consequently knew nothing of our customs and those intimate characteristics which make up the difference of race. In our own family there were interesting and curious peculiarities due to the historical environment cumulative through many centuries, and the mingling of Italian, Corsican and German blood, which made us in some ways different from other children, and consequently, harder to understand. The religious problem in itself was more than inexperienced young



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women, generally under twenty-three years of age, could be expected to solve.

Yet even their mistakes were, thank Heaven, not without good effects. The unreasonable sternness which I have often met with as a child, has later in many cases made me more indulgent toward others, for I remembered only too keenly what I had suffered in similar circumstances myself. And last but not least, I owe to the surfeit of German novels my keen appreciation of sane English literature. I could never have appreciated Thackeray as I did if I had not been prepared for reading him by the *Gartenlaube*; and my intense enjoyment of Mark Twain is, I am sure, due to the same reaction.

And whatever the unnecessary hardships, whatever the unnecessary trials of our childhood may have been, they are fully compensated by the strong love they

## ***T H E E N D***

fostered between us brothers and sisters,  
a love upon which death has set the seal  
that bars all change. Through this bond  
of our childhood we remain seven, though  
“some of us in the churchyard lie” and the  
rest are separated by lands and seas.









